The Prologue of the Gospel of John

Edited by
JAN G. VAN DER WATT,
R. ALAN CULPEPPER,
and UDO SCHNELLE

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The Prologue of the Gospel of John

Its Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts. Papers read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013

Edited by

Jan G. van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle

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Foreword

This volume had its inception in the fall of 2012 when Jan van der Watt invited Alan Culpepper and Udo Schnelle to join with him, as a steering committee to organize the Colloquium Ioanneum. The Colloquium was inspired by the Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colloquium_Oecumenicum_Paulinum), which was organized in 1968 and meets every two or three years to discuss portions of the Pauline letters and topics related to Pauline theology. We agreed to invite eleven others to constitute the membership of the Colloquium Ioanneum, based on the ideal of constituting a group of scholars distinguished by their contributions to Johannine studies that would be broadly representative of different nationalities, religious traditions, and approaches to the Gospel. Each will hold membership in the Colloquium as long as they participate actively. In time, others will be invited to fill vacancies.

The following comprised the founding membership of the Colloquium Ioanneum:

R. Alan Culpepper, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA, USA
Jörg Frey, Theological Faculty, University of Zurich, Switzerland
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Meetings will be held biennially. The 2013 meeting was held on the Island of Patmos, and the 2015 meeting at Ephesus. The theme of the inaugural meeting in 2013 was the prologue, John 1:1–18, which invites analysis and interpretation from so many vantage points. Its background, relation to the rest of the Gospel, structure(s), themes, theology, and literary and rhetorical functions have all been studied intensively. Alan Culpepper and Udo Schnelle delivered the two main lectures, each of which introduced one of the main sections of the program. Craig Koester, George Parsenios, Marianne Meye Thompson, and Jean Zumstein were asked to contribute short papers on the philosophical background of the prologue or philosophical interpretations of the prologue. John Ashton was invited to attend the conference as a distinguished guest. Jan van der Watt convened the Colloquium on the first day and offered closing comments at the end of the program.

Alan Culpepper's lecture, which was intentionally introductory, addressed the relationship between the prologue and the Gospel, noting its literary themes and theological perspectives. The question of how the prologue portrays God's work in the world leads to the observation that it speaks of five divine initiatives: (1) the work of creation through the Logos (v. 3), (2) the giving of the Law through Moses (v. 17), (3) the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6–8, 15), (4) the coming of the light (v. 9)/the incarnation of the Logos (v. 14), and (5) the birth of the children of God (vv. 12–13). The opening verses of John refer to the role of the Logos in creation and interpret the Logos in light of the Wisdom tradition. John signals that God's creative work is ongoing and not limited to the originating act of creation. The incarnation reframes God's act of creation as Jesus goes on giving life. The prologue securely establishes the work of God through the Logos in creation and the incarnation before recognizing the role of Moses and the giving of the Law. The roles of both Moses and the Law are also reframed when they are brought in relationship to the incarnation: they have become witnesses to Jesus. Similarly, by introducing John the Baptist as a witness, the prologue anticipates the trial motif in the rest of the Gospel. The incarnation is clearly the central theme of both the prologue and the Gospel. Culpepper considers only two points related to this all-encompassing theme: (1) the points at which the prologue speaks of the incarnation, and (2) Jesus' mission as the incarnate Logos. Although the titular use of the term *logos* does not occur in the rest of the Gospel, the continuity between the work of the Logos in creation and Jesus' work in giving life continues to shape the Gospel's characterization of Jesus. This theme is further articulated, and indeed brought to its fullest expression in the prologue, in the fifth of the prologue's divine initiatives: giving power

to those who believe to become "children of God." What the prophet Isaiah looked forward to in the future had already begun in the ministry of the Revealer and was being accomplished in the mission of the church. It was no longer a future expectation but a reality already in process. This introductory analysis illustrates how the prologue provides the theological framework needed to understand Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection in the rest of the Gospel.

John Ashton asks the fundamental question whether the first eighteen verses of the Gospel are really a prologue. His essay serves as an unplanned rejoinder to Culpepper's, thereby illustrating at the outset of this volume the extent to which even the basic questions surrounding the "prologue" are still unsettled. Agreeing with Harnack, and in opposition to Barrett, Ashton contends that the Prologue was built round a previously existing Logos-hymn, and that at some point the evangelist substituted this for an earlier introduction to his Gospel. Do these verses, Ashton asks, which were originally composed as a hymn to the Logos, really constitute "a proper introduction to a narrative in which the Logos is never mentioned, and where there is not even a hint of the idea that forms the climax of the hymn, the startlingly novel concept of incarnation"? The Prologue does not perform the usual function of a preface or introduction, which is to summarize the content of what follows. Rather, the differences between the prologue and the rest of the Gospel, in both terminology and theological vision, confirm that it was originally a hymn to the Logos, to which Ashton assigns verses 1–4, 10–11, the beginning of 12, most of 14, and 16. Affirming the necessity of adopting a multi-staged understanding of the composition of the Gospel, and the prologue, Ashton contends that "the Prologue was added to the Gospel just before (or at the same time as) the new material of the second edition, notably chs. 6 and 17." Both the author of the hymn and the evangelist pointed to the glory that was manifest in Jesus, and this was probably what drew the evangelist to the hymn composed by another member of the Johannine community, but they saw it differently. Ashton explains: "What astounded the author of the hymn was his vision of wisdom in the flesh, whereas what preoccupied the evangelist was such an overwhelming sense of the divine glory of the man whose story he was telling."

William R. G. Loader addresses the significance of the prologue for understanding John's soteriology. Among the alternative views described by Ashton in the previous essay, Loader is persuaded "by the view that the prologue functions rhetorically as an introduction to what follows … and that for that purpose the author has employed the Jewish wisdom/logos tradition already developed christologically." After surveying three ways in which the Logos tradition might have been developed Christologically, Loader observes that all three share "an understanding of soteriology ac-

cording to which one receives life and enters a relationship with God through responding positively to God's word, God's wisdom." In Johannine soteriology, as in Judaism, God offers a relationship. In Judaism one accepts this gift by taking on the gift of God's word in Torah. In John's soteriology it is the same, but one accepts by identifying Jesus with Torah, or as God's new initiative to offer the life and truth to which Torah pointed. Therefore, "in both Judaism and in the christological version the offer and the response are essentially the same or of the same kind: believing, accepting the offer, entering the relationship, living out the consequences, and enjoying the privileges of being God's children." This essentially Jewish soteriology of the prologue is repeated time after time in the Gospel as Jesus offers eternal life and confronts those who reject it. The prologue's soteriology is therefore thoroughly consistent with what one finds in the Gospel. Similar in focus and structure as it may be to Judaism, however, John's soteriology leads to a new social reality, identifying with the community of believers and participating with them in the new life mediated by the Spirit.

Jan van der Watt considers the question of whether John 1:1 is indeed intended to be clear in its meaning: was the intention not rather that it should have riddle-like qualities? The first verse of the Gospel appears to confront the reader with ambiguities that invite further clarification, clarification that is not directly available in the verse itself, but is rather, *inter alia*, to be looked for in the rest of the Gospel. In this essay the question is approached from the angle of the grammar and syntax, and whether these aspects contribute to the idea that this verse has riddle-like qualities. Three grammatical constructions in John 1:1 receive specific attention: the first is the fact that the phrase, Ἐν ἀρχῇ (v. 1a), is anarthrous, although it seems to be definite. The second is the use of πρός in πρὸς τὸν θεόν (v. 1b); and the third is the prepositional use of the predicate in the phrase καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (v. 1c). All three aspects are investigated, considering different explanations in each case. In all three cases van der Watt concludes that the grammar is clear according to what could be expected from Greek speakers at the time the Gospel was written. The syntactical character of 1:1, with short conjunctive sentences following in a stair-like parallelism, seems to provide some support for the riddle-like nature of 1:1. The syntax opens up various and interrelated options for understanding the different statements in relation to one another. No final decision on the "correct" reading is really possible, as re-reading and re-thinking in light of the rest of the Gospel seems to be invited. Apart from the syntax, arguments in favor of riddle-like qualities for John 1:1 should be looked for elsewhere, including theological, socio-historical, narrative, and other aspects of the text. It is however noted that the nature of the grammar would also not exclude the possibility of, or argue against, 1:1 being riddle-like, if these other aspects indeed show that to be the case.

Catrin Williams explores the theme of seeing (or not seeing) God in the prologue and body of John's Gospel. This theme is central to John's Christology, which maintains that while no one can see God, God can be seen in Jesus. As these two assertions are expressed in v. 18, it appears that this verse serves as a bridge between the prologue and the body of the Gospel, and hence verses 17 and 18 may be the evangelist's addition to the earlier hymn to the Logos. Absent from v. 18, however, is any statement to the effect that Jesus himself has seen God. The theme of "seeing God" appears elsewhere in the Gospel narrative to highlight the exclusive revelation of God in Jesus, such as one finds in 6:46. Acceptance of the one sent by God is crucial for not only seeing but also hearing the Father (5:37–38). Verse 18 may be formulated to deny the validity of any heavenly ascent or vision. The contrast between Moses and Jesus, therefore, continues into v. 18. The grace and truth that was previously associated with the Law and the glory of YHWH (Exod 34:6) has now become manifest through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Isaiah is presented more positively in the Gospel in that it affirms that Isaiah "saw" the manifestation of divine glory in Jesus' earthly life (12:41). Williams interprets the effect of this verse, which comes at the end of Jesus' public ministry in John, as follows:

> The visionary language of Isaiah's call is therefore turned on its head and takes on new meaning, for, in view of the denials expressed elsewhere in the Gospel, the evangelist asserts that it is a true "seeing" of the earthly Jesus, not heavenly ascents or visions, that is required in order to experience a true "vision" of God's glory.

Consequently, Williams concludes, the emphasis in the prologue is on Jesus as the one who enables others to see God: "For the evangelist, then, the proper way to behold Jesus' earthly form is to see it as the locus of God's glory – the glory that Isaiah saw ahead of time."

Ruben Zimmermann examines the role of John the Baptist as a character in the prologue and the rest of the Fourth Gospel. While John the Baptist is widely recognized as a witness to Jesus in the Gospel of John, his role on both the story level and the discourse level is "anything but 'flat' and monotone." His testimony to Christ is multifaceted; it does not simply repeat stereotypical titles. Instead, Jesus is illuminated by tradition-rich symbols and spatial and temporal metaphors. As a man, but one divinely commissioned, John is a liminal figure. He stands between the temporal and the eternal, the divine and the human. He is a "connecting link" and a "threshold," the "gatekeeper." Neither is the characterization of John simply static. As Zimmermann observes:

> John arrives in prominence, but in every scene he fades more and more into the background. The "development" of this character consists of a successive disappearance. The testifying John leaves the scene – but precisely in this way he fulfills his function since others take over his role, a fact recognized at the latest by John 10.

John testifies, then others testify to his testimony, and in this way they fulfill his role as they too become witnesses.

Michael Theobald finds in the "witness" terminology, and the placement of its occurrences in the Johannine writings, a key to understanding the origin of these writings and the communities that lie behind them. Taking Gerd Theissen's observation that the early Christian writings were often found in "canonical clusters" of a gospel with other writings, Theobald postulates the early existence of the Johannine corpus of the Gospel and three letters. Witness terminology, often in the "we" statements that function as authorization formulas, occurs at significant points in this corpus, especially in the prologues to John and 1 John and at the end of the Gospel and 3 John. The occurrences in the Gospel connect the testimony of John the Baptist with that of the Beloved Disciple, and the authorization of the "we" who speak in John 21:24 and indirectly in 19:35. John 21, seen in this light, confirms the truth of the witness of the Johannine tradition contained in the Gospel and interpreted by the Elder following the schism of the community referred to in 1 John 2:19, and affirms its truth for others outside the Johannine communities. This "we" may be the "Johannine school" in which the writings were composed, the Johannine communities, or the group that prepared the corpus for circulation. 3 John embraces the testimony of Gaius, Demetrius, and those who receive them, and 3 John 12, coming at the end of the corpus, provides a fitting conclusion and authorization for it with the Elder's affirmation, "and you know that our testimony is true." Taken together, therefore, these references provide important clues to the origin of the Johannine corpus in a community of witnesses ("Gemeinschaft der Zeugen").

Christos Karakolis demonstrates how the prologue functions as the basis for dramatic irony in the Johannine narrative. Dramatic (or situational) irony, he explains, "presupposes the existence of a story in the background of the narrative level, which is already known to the implied author and readers, but not to the characters of the narrative." Whereas almost all of the characters in John are ignorant of Jesus' true identity, from the prologue readers of the Gospel receive a plethora of detailed information about the Logos that no character in the Johannine narrative possesses. Karakolis highlights elements of the prologue's story of the Logos that are instrumental in the function of dramatic irony within the Fourth Gospel. For example, the reader knows that every time Jesus, the incarnate Logos, speaks, his words are as authoritative and true as the words of God himself. The story of the healing of the lame man (5:1–18) illustrates how these elements function to set up dramatic irony in the body of the Gospel. When the lame man tells Jesus that he has no one (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω) to put him into the pool when the water is troubled, the reader, who knows Jesus' identity, perceives the irony of the lame man's response to Jesus –

the creative Logos in whom there is life! John's dramatic irony then takes a bitter turn when, by "not receiving" Jesus (cf. 1:11), the Jews (in 5:18) seek to kill Jesus and thereby miss the opportunity to become real children of God (1:12). In this way, the prologue's Logos-concept is presupposed in the Johannine narrative, although it is never clearly mentioned *per se*. Finally, Karakolis suggests that rather than enmity, "sympathy on the part of the audience (observer) towards characters who are trapped within their own ignorance (victims) is an important effect of dramatic irony," and this sympathy may blunt the reader's sense of hostility toward those whose who do not share the privileged information conveyed by the prologue.

Udo Schnelle's essay on the presuppositions, methods, and perspectives of philosophical interpretation of the Gospel of John opens the second part of the volume. New Testament scholarship is moving beyond the categories that once dominated the study of the relationship of the early Christian writings to the intellectual currents of their day (e.g., the influence of Hellenism on Judaism, or tradition history). We may now ask whether the authors of the New Testament deliberately participated in the general philosophical/theological discourses of antiquity. Five considerations guide this inquiry. First, in antiquity philosophy and theology belonged together and were seen not merely as a theoretical business but as concrete forms of life. Consequently, understanding the popular mainstream of ancient philosophy in the New Testament period (i.e., Stoics/Cynics, Epicureans, Platonists) as concrete forms of life opens up numerous thematic and practical convergences. When compared with other philosophical-theological thinkers of the first two centuries C.E. (Seneca, Plutarch, Dio of Prusa, Epictetus), Paul and John hold their own admirably. Second, the sophisticated composition of the Fourth Gospel, with its memorable language and images, indicates a high level of education. In particular, the adoption of philosophical concepts such as logos, truth, and spirit distinguishes John as somebody who intentionally interacts with the educational tradition of his time. Third, the place of the early Christian writings in the broad history of ancient literature needs to be fundamentally reconsidered. Earlier scholars, especially Martin Dibelius, assigned the New Testament writings to the category of *Kleinliteratur* because they do not measure up to the stylistic sophistication of the Greek literature of the classical period (5th–4th c. B.C.). When compared with the literature of its own period, however, they are not in any sense deficient. Fourth, parallels with the ancient philosophical schools and indications within the writings themselves suggest that the Pauline and Johannine writings were not purely individual achievements but the work of a Pauline and a Johannine school respectively. Fifth, the success of Johannine Christianity in such an intellectually and culturally demanding surrounding becomes comprehensible only because it was able to participate in the discourses of ancient religion and philosophy. The

remainder of the essay offers methodological guidelines for a philosophical interpretation of the Gospel of John and discusses its reformulation of the philosophical concepts of Logos and Truth, and its definitions of God as examples of the importance of such study for a fuller understanding of John's creative achievement. Philosophical interpretation of the Gospel of John is not only an important addition to the common methods and questions, but it modifies our understanding of these texts: they are not merely religious but intellectual achievements in the context of ancient philosophy and theology.

In his contribution, "Between Torah and Stoa: How Could Readers Have Understood the Johannine Logos?" *Jörg Frey* focuses on the term and concept of the λόγος in John 1:1–2 and beyond, which has been a stimulus and an enigma for interpreters from the church fathers until modern history-of-religions interpretation. Drawing on the observation that the majority of recent commentators rather quickly point to Hellenistic Judaism (esp. Philo) and the Jewish Wisdom tradition as the only appropriate background for understanding the term in John, Frey argues for a wider perspective. He calls for a consideration of not only the biblical and early Jewish tradition but also the Greco-Roman usage of the term or concept from Heraclitus and the Stoics down to Middle-Platonism and the Hermetica, including the usage for deities such as Hermes and Osiris. Only when considering that wide range of meanings, does the hermeneutical value and force of the term in the opening of the Gospel become clear. Frey, there-fore, takes a reception-historical perspective and points to the readings of Valentinian authors (Heracleon and Ptolemaeus) who interpreted (and modified) the Johannine concept from their Platonic worldview. Even if this may be a "misunderstanding," it shows how the term could stimulate readers with a very different education. And although the setting of those late second-century Valentinians clearly differs from that of the Johannine communities at the end of the first century, Frey argues that we cannot preclude that Jews and Jewish or Gentile Jesus followers in the diaspora were also basically acquainted with philosophical thoughts and concepts and thus could read the term within the wide range of meanings and perceive the various resonances the term could inspire in different contexts.

In the last part of his contribution, Frey thus explores "clarifications in the reading process." In an experimental reader-response reading, he considers how readers of different backgrounds could understand the λόγος in the beginning of John, connect it with their own views of the Logos, perceive difficulties or differences, and follow the way the λόγος concept is unfolded in the course of the prologue until its "incarnation" is mentioned and he is finally identified with Jesus Christ in 1:17. In this perspective, the Johannine prologue with its opening appears as a text with an enormous hermeneutical potential. It is not only a philosophical lure but a hermeneu-

tical tool with the power to attract readers from a wide range of backgrounds and draw them to the message of the Gospel.

Methodologically, Frey's article is a plea for reading John in a cross-cultural perspective and for utilizing the reception perspective in connection with the history-of-religions issues in order to not only "explain" the most probable background of a text or its author but also discover the communicative force and hermeneutical potential of the text.

Craig R. Koester, following Schnelle's lead, examines the philosophical content of "Spirit" (πνεῦμα) and its use in the Gospel of John. Given the pervasive presence of Jewish associations in John's references to *pneuma*, it is challenging to ask how this theme might have engaged readers whose outlook was informed primarily by philosophical discourse. The Stoics gave *pneuma* a central place in their understanding of the world, which they understood to be a unified whole. Everything that comprised the world was understood in material terms. The union of wind and fire creates the special combination called *pneuma*, which they understood to be a kind of energy that operated in the world, and most fully in human reason. The Gospel, on the other hand, does not derive its understanding of the divine *pneuma* from the natural world or any aspect of the human constitution. The Gospel's chief interest is in how people receive life in its fullest sense. Such life involves a framework of thought that differs from Stoicism, although the *pneuma* plays an integral role in the process by which believers attain eternal life through the revelatory work of the Logos incarnate in Jesus. After reviewing recent proposals that the Gospel of John has been influenced by or adopts a Stoic view of *pneuma*, Koester concludes that these efforts are largely unsuccessful: "the differences in perspective are far more striking than any similarities." Alternatively, Koester asks how the Fourth Gospel's comments about the *pneuma* might have engaged readers whose outlook was informed by philosophy. Here he finds that the Gospel uses language that would have evoked a range of associations for such readers, and that the narrative both appropriates and transforms those associations. In particular, "a reader whose perspectives had been shaped by Stoic thought might have found Jesus' remarks to the Samaritan woman appealing, because they call people beyond disputes about holy places to the higher calling of worship 'in *pneuma* and truth' (John 4:23–24)." Nevertheless, while Stoics could speak of a *pneuma* that was inherent in people, John's Gospel insists that the *pneuma* that brings life and empowers true worship comes from a divine source, outside of the person. The familiar often becomes unfamiliar as John reshapes notions of the *pneuma* Christologically and integrates them into the Johannine worldview.

George Parsenios examines the role of the Greek virtue of παρρησία, open, frank speech, in the Gospel of John. Frank speech was vital in the public life of the Greek city-states. In addition, Greek and Roman philos-

ophers cultivated *parrēsia* as a tool of moral formation; philosophy depended on bold truth-telling. Parsenios ventures that "If one is careful not to claim too much, … one can discern considerable points of contact between the *parrēsia* of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and the *parrēsia* of ancient orators and philosophers." For example, when the brothers of Jesus urge him not to act in secret but to adopt *parrēsia*, they repeat a standard opposition common among orators and philosophers. Even here, in John 7:1–4, when Jesus does not declare himself openly in Jerusalem, he refuses to do so for reasons that were recognized in ancient discussions of *parrēsia*: he refuses to speak boldly because he refuses to engage in self-aggrandizement. On other occasions, before both friends and foes, Jesus does speak boldly. In response to the high priest, he declares, "I have spoken openly (παρρησία) to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the *Ioudaioi* come together. I said nothing in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ)" (18:20). Jesus confronts the sins of his opponents publicly and boldly, and they in turn accuse him of blasphemy. Attending to the connections between Jesus in John and Parrēsiathēs in the work of Lucian, Parsenios shows how it is dangerous to speak boldly. The response to a person who engages in *parrēsia* is often violence and persecution. Like Socrates, Jesus was killed for bold truth-telling. Unlike Socrates, however, Jesus makes no defense and remains silent before his accusers. Still, in both cases they use *parrēsia* to distinguish the true from the false; it reveals what is true beneath a false veneer.

Marianne Meye Thompson reports on the philosophical content of the term, "light" (φῶς), and its use in the Gospel of John. She finds two patterns in ancient philosophical sources in which light plays a role, the first cosmological and the second epistemological. In the first, light is a phenomenon intrinsic to the physical world; its counterpart is darkness. Ancient Greek philosophy viewed the world in terms of "dualities" or "pairs of opposites." The Pythagoreans developed a list of ten such oppositional pairs, including male/female, right/left, odd/even, and light/darkness. Light is linked with life and darkness with death. In the second pattern, which holds greater potential for our reading of the Gospel of John, the connection of light and vision is developed. In Plato's analogy of the cave, light represents both the Good itself and the means by which one knows the good. Accordingly, light and sight become metaphors for grasping that which is ultimate or true. Because light makes perception possible, Philo speaks paradoxically of the "most brilliant and radiant light of the invisible and Almighty God" (*Somn.* 1.72). Thompson comments: "To see the light of God is to see the God who cannot be seen." When she turns to the Gospel of John, Thompson observes that the light comes into the world for the benefit of humankind: the "light of humankind" (τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων) is the light *for* them (1:4). Furthermore, "one comes to the light, then, by

faith, because the light has come into the world to make it possible to see the light: by light one 'sees' or believes in the light." In John as in Greek philosophy, however, light is set over against darkness. Darkness is a sphere or power that seeks to overcome the light. As with Plato's cave dwellers, some refuse to leave their shadows and darkness. The problem lies not with the light, but with those who refuse to see it. There are two levels of seeing in John: there is physical sight and there is insight. Sight does not guarantee understanding or insight – the eyes are not always sure witnesses – but the blind man in John 9 is given both sight and insight. Not surprisingly, John's use of light imagery has much in common with the Greek philosophers, and Philo especially. But there are differences. For John the light is not intrinsic to or inherent in the world but comes from outside of it. By locating light in the person of Jesus, John's vocabulary of comprehension takes on a richer and more complex meaning.

Jean Zumstein assesses the philosophical content of the term, "sign" (σημεῖον), and its use in the Gospel of John. He acknowledges at the outset that there is no evidence of John's direct dependence on Greek philosophical tradition or Philo. Instead, he asks how "signs" would have been understood in John's historical context. As a conceptual approach to this investigation, Zumstein employs C. S. Peirce's theoretical model of the interaction of the sign, the object, and the interpreter. Signs, as a formal concept, played an important role in Epicurean recognition theory, as signs make possible movement from the visible world to the invisible, opening the way to a deeper perception of the cosmos. Ancient sceptics (e.g., Sextus Empiricus) introduced the issue of the credibility of the sign, but signs had no specific religious significance. When one turns to ancient literature and historiography, one finds, for example in Homer's *Odyssey*, that thunder functions as a sign, not in the biblical sense, since no natural laws are broken, but in the sense of a divine omen. In Diodorus Siculus one finds that the signs of God are present in the immanent world, but especially at holy sites. Plutarch developed a theological theory of signs as a means of divine communication. The same elements are found in ancient Jewish literature, where signs function both to convey understanding of a future reality or a yet unrecognized reality, and as a means of divine communication with human beings. Turning to the Gospel of John, one finds that "signs" can be narrated *Wundergeschichten*, as in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels. "Signs," however, designate only Jesus' deeds, never his words, and they can be perceived visually. It is possible, but debated, that Jesus' post-Easter appearances, or the whole of his ministry, are to be understood as signs. At the same time, for all John shares with other ancient literature, it develops the hermeneutical potential of signs in a unique manner. The term is found almost exclusively in the words of the narrator, and the simple seeing of signs is problematized in

John's interpretation of the meaning (and difficulty) of believing. When the second element of Peirce's model is considered, one sees that the object of the sign is clarified by the narrator or Jesus. For example, the narrator explains that the Cana wedding miracle confirms the lordship of the Johannine Jesus. The same conclusion is evident when John's other signs are examined: the Johannine signs must be interpreted Christologically. Consequently, for John the object of the signs belongs not to the realm of the demonstrable (*Gebiet des Feststellbaren*) to that of the indeterminate (*Unverfügbarkeit*). The third element of Peirce's model, the interpreter, reveals the surprising pattern that in John the signs do not carry unequivocal meanings but are interpreted variously by different characters, a pattern that is especially striking since the signs are "wonders." The signs have a revelatory function that can only be grasped by Christological interpretation which in turn calls the interpreter to believe.

The prologue is an inexhaustible, literally unfathomable, text. These essays summarize the state of research and open new insights into the prologue's themes and characters, ways it is related to the body of the Gospel, and the ways it engages ancient Greek philosophy. They also suggest many avenues for further study, thereby fulfilling one of the chief aims of the Colloquium Ioanneum.

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Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASV	American Standard Version
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BDAG	W. Arndt, F. W. Danker, and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBE	Bible in Basic English
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
Bijdr	*Bijdragen*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CEV	Contemporary English Version
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
Darby 1890	J. N. Darby, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments*. Translated from the Original Texts. London: G. Morrish, 1890.
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und deutsch*. 3 Parts. 6th ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951/52
DNP	*Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*. Edited by H. Cancik, M. Landfester, and B. Egger. 16 vols. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1996–2003
DRA	Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition

EBib	Études bibliques
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHS.P	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 20: Philosophie
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23: Theologie
ERE	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.* Edited by J. Hastings. 13 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908–27. Reprint, 24 vols. Whitefish: Kessinger, 2003
ESV	English Standard Version
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FC	Fathers of the Church
FF	Foundations and Facets
GNB	Good News Bible
GNT	Good News Translation
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HKNT	Handkommentar (Hand-Commentar) zum Neuen Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTCNT	Herders Theological Commentary on the New Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HWP	*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Edited by J. Ritter. 13 vols. Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2007
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
ISV	International Standard Version
JAOC	Judaïsme ancient et origines du christianisme
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th edition with revised Supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
MNT	Macedonian New Testament
MNTC	The Moffatt New Testament Commentary
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NAU	New American Standard Bible (Updated)
NAWG	Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen: Philologisch-historische Klasse

NBL	*Neues Bibel-Lexikon*. Edited by M. Görg and B. Lang. 3 vols. Zurich/Düsseldorf: Benziger, 1991, 1995, 2001
NCB	New Century Bible
NCV	New Century Version
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLB	Neues Leben Bibel
NLV	New Life Version
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTA NF	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. Neue Folge
NTL	The New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857–1886
PW	*Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. New edition by Georg Wissowa. Stuttgart: Druckenmüller, 1893 ff.
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
OTP	*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985
QD	Quaestiones disputatae
RAC	*Reallexikon for Antike und Christentum*. Edited by T. Klauser et al. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1950 ff.
RGG^4	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch in gemeinverständlicher Darstellung*. Edited by H. D. Betz, D. S. Browning, B. Janowski and E. Jüngel. 8 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2007
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
RST	Regensburger Studien zur Theologie
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCHNT	Studia ad corpus hellenisticum Novi Testamenti
SIJD	Schriften des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum
SJT	*Scotish Journal of Theology*
SP	Sacra pagina
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum/Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVF	*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta.* Edited by H. von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924

TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TB	Theologische Bücherei
TBei	*Theologische Beiträge*
TBT	*The Bible Today*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis et al. 15 vols. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977–2006
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TNT	The Translator's New Testament
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. 36 vols. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1976–2004
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TWNT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. 10 vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932–1979
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VD	*Verbum domini*
WEB	World English Bible
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Part 1

Confronting the Challenges of the Prologue

The Prologue as Theological Prolegomenon to the Gospel of John

R. Alan Culpepper

The Gospel of John is distinctive among the gospels in that it opens with an elaborate, initially poetic, prologue (John 1:1–18) that introduces the narrative that follows. The prologue supplies what Meir Sternberg called chronological, preliminary, concentrated exposition.[1] Study of the prologue has generally concentrated on (1) its origin (whether it is based on a hymnic source or was composed for its present purposes), (2) its structure (chronological, topical, poetic, and/or chiastic), (3) the logos concept (its background and role in the Gospel), and (4) the relationship between the prologue and the Gospel. I propose to share some reflections on this latter topic, with an interest in both literary themes and theological perspectives in the hope that my comments will serve as an introduction for more detailed discussion in the rest of the papers prepared for this volume.

The issue of the relationship between the prologue and the rest of the Gospel is well known.[2] While noting that "in its present form, it is indissolubly linked with the Gospel itself," Rudolf Schnackenburg raised the following alternatives: (1) it should be read apart from the body of the Gospel as "a section with its own significance"; (2) it is an overture which prepares for the thought of the Gospel that follows; (3) it is an integral part

[1] M. Sternberg, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 1, 98–99. Cf. R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 18–19.

[2] A. Harnack, "Über das Verhältniß des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZTK* 2 (1892): 189–231; J. A. T. Robinson, "The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John," *NTS* 9 (1962–63): 120–29; M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), esp. 296–399; E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNTSup 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); J. Zumstein, "Der Prolog, Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium," in *Der Johannesprolog* (ed. G. Kruck; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 49–75; and J. Beutler, "Der Johannes-Prolog – Ouvertüre des Johannesevangeliums," in *Der Johannesprolog* (ed. G. Kruck; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 77–106.

of the Gospel, the "beginning" of its message, taking the existence of the Redeemer back to before creation.[3] His conclusion is that the prologue is "a considered theological composition, placed at the beginning for Christological reasons."[4] Raymond Brown pointed out, however, that in addition to the difference in the poetic qualities of the prologue, it contains "theological concepts and terms … that have no echo in the Gospel."[5] Among these he listed: (1) λόγος does not occur outside the prologue as a Christological title, (2) χάρις and πλήρωμα do not occur in the Gospel, (3) ἀλήθεια has a different meaning in the Gospel ("truth" rather than "endurance, fidelity," and (4) "tabernacle" in v. 14 is replaced by Jesus as the temple in the Gospel.[6] Since Bultmann, the most common solution has been that the evangelist edited a Logos hymn, whether drawn from outside the Johannine community or from its own traditions and worship, and used it as the prologue to the Gospel.[7] Jean Zumstein, more recently, has argued that it is impossible to ignore the theological discontinuity between the prologue and the Gospel because the prologue says nothing about Jesus as the one sent (*Sendungschristologie*) or the death of Jesus and does not programmatically introduce the Gospel.[8] The theological function of the prologue consists instead in defining the hermeneutics (*den hermeneutischen Rahmen*) that must guide the reading of the Gospel.[9]

Since the Gospel gives particular attention to Jesus' relationship to the Father, God's role as sender, and Jesus' dependence upon the Father, we may begin with the question of how the prologue portrays God's work in the world.[10] A cursory reading of the prologue reveals that it speaks of five divine initiatives:

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[3] R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Vol. 1 (trans. K. Smyth; HTCNT; New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 221.

[4] Ibid.

[5] R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1 (AB 29; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 19.

[6] Ibid.

[7] For the latter position see P. N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2011), 68, who holds that the Elder, the final editor of the Gospel, added the prologue.

[8] Zumstein, "Der Prolog, Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium," 51–52 (n. 2). See further his conclusion that "Es ist daher illusorisch, im Logoshymnus eine Kurzfassung der Theologie des Evangeliums finden zu wollen" (74). As we will note later, however, the prologue in its current form does introduce the sending motif with the introduction of John the Baptist as one sent by God (John 1:6).

[9] Ibid., 75.

[10] This topic has been explored notably by P. W. Meyer, "'The Father': The Presentation of God in the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 255–73; and M. M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids:

1. The work of creation through the Logos (v. 3)
2. The giving of the law through Moses (v. 17)
3. The sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6–8, 15)
4. The coming of the light (v. 9)/the incarnation of the Logos (v. 14)
5. The birth of the children of God (vv. 12–13)

These five initiatives will provide the structure for our investigation of the theological and literary relationship between the prologue and the body of the Gospel. In particular, we will be interested in how the Gospel's presentation of Jesus is influenced by setting the incarnation in relationship to the other four divine initiatives, and how those initiatives are reframed or reinterpreted when they are set in relationship to the incarnation.

I. The Work of Creation through the Logos (v. 3)

John is unique among the Gospels in connecting Jesus with God's work in creation. Raymond Brown observed that "the fact that the *Word* creates means that creation is an act of revelation."[11] By beginning with the words, "In the beginning," John creates a clear echo of the opening words of the Book of Genesis, and perhaps suggests that this Gospel should be regarded as scripture – a continuation of the record of the mighty acts of God in creation, in history, and in the people of Israel.[12] Like Lady Wisdom, the Logos was with God in the beginning and was the agent of creation. John's use of the wisdom tradition for the presentation of Jesus as a wisdom teacher is also evident in its emphasis on illumination or revelation, abiding, and the sifting of human responses that accompanies it.[13] As the Son of God in whom the pre-existent Logos became incarnate, all that Jesus says and does in the rest of the Gospel carries divine authority.[14] The characterization of Jesus in the rest of the Gospel flows out of these opening verses, especially Jesus' power over and within nature. When Jesus changes water to wine, heals the sick and restores life, walks on water, multiplies

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Eerdmans, 2001); and in various sections by J. G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (BIS 47; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[11] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:25 (n. 5).

[12] M. J. J. Menken and S. Moyise, *Genesis in the New Testament* (LNTS 466; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 88–90.

[13] M. Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup 71; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 152–58. P. Borgen, *Logos Was the True Light and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* (Relieff 9; Trondheim: Tapir, 1983), 99, has explored the targumic character of the prologue at length and concluded that "It can be considered very probable that the evangelist has not only reproduced words from Gen. i … but that he has also drawn on learned Jewish exegesis."

[14] So also R. A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 327.

loaves and fish, gives sight to a man born blind, and raises the dead, the reader is expected to understand that Jesus is continuing to exercise the authority of the divine Logos through whom all things were created. The prologue *tells* us about the work of the Logos; Jesus' signs *show* us that the Logos was incarnate in Jesus. Marianne Meye Thompson makes the astute observation that "although there are no further references in John to God's creation of the world through the Logos, the emphasis on God's gift of life through the agency of Jesus – the Word incarnate, Wisdom incarnate – shows the unity of the life-giving work of God and Jesus."[15] Both confer life. Further, "This is not so much a creation ethic or theology as it is a theology of God's far-reaching dominion and authority, exercised through the work of Jesus."[16] Therefore there is no sharp distinction between "natural" and supernatural, and no natural theology of the created order bearing witness to the Creator.

The key value established in the first five verses is "life."[17] Life has its origin in the Word, an affirmation that implies something about God's purpose for creation as well as the ultimate aim or fulfillment of God's purposes. One of the debated issues, however, is whether the first occurrence of the word "life" in v. 4 refers to natural life or spiritual or eternal life. Let's recall vv. 3 and 4: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of men" (NRSV). These verses are replete with problems. Where does v. 3 end and v. 4 begin? How does one read and punctuate the statement, "What has come into being in him was life?" Is it "in him" or "in it"? And what is the meaning of the reference to life? Does it mean the life of the created order, or the life conveyed to those who received the Logos incarnate in Jesus? I contend, contrary to many Johannine scholars, that the first reference to life in v. 4 refers to all created life, not to spiritual or eternal life. Raymond Brown, on the other hand, claims, "Of course, in its first chapter Genesis is speaking of natural life while the prologue is speaking of eternal life,"[18] and "in v. 4 the Prologue is still speaking in the context of the creation narrative of Genesis. That which had especially come to be in God's creative Word was the gift of eternal life."[19]

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[15] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 136 (n. 10).

[16] Ibid., 140.

[17] S. Harstine, "The Fourth Gospel's Characterization of God," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. C. W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 137, observes that "The character of God serves a mimetic function in the text as the source of life, a function established for the audience in 1.1–4."

[18] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:26 (n. 5).

[19] Ibid.

Ed Miller identified five interpretations of ζωή (life) in v. 4a but, like Brown, Miller favored the incarnational.[20]

John often uses words with deliberate ambiguity and plays on their multiple meanings. So here John asserts that the Logos, like Wisdom, was the agent of creation. Wisdom brought into being living things, and then gave to those who would receive it the revelation that leads to a higher way of life. John moves step by step in these verses: (1) a positive statement: "all things came into being through him" (which parenthetically would include the affirmation that the Logos gave life to all living things); (2) a negative restatement: "and without him not one thing came into being"; and then (3) a restatement with further specification: "what-came-into-being-in-him was life." John often moves from the literal to the spiritual and from the literal to the ironic, challenging readers to grasp the relationship between the two. In these opening verses John declares the role of the Logos in creation and begins to lead the reader to the characteristic sense of life in this Gospel – that of the life bestowed by the Word incarnate in Jesus. In the first occurrence of the term in v. 4, however, the sense is ambiguous, allowing the reader to start from the context of the creation of life while moving the reader to the full sense of life in this Gospel.[21] John is primarily interested in the nature of eternal life, and will even affirm (in 17:3) that it is already present and available here and now, but this first reference does not contain all the meaning John will eventually load into this term.

The opening verses of John refer to the role of the Logos in creation and interpret the Logos in light of the Wisdom tradition, both of which suggest the broad sense of "life." John often entertains more than one level of meaning and introduces one sense only to lead the reader to see a higher meaning. The next line moves from an anarthrous reference to life to a specific reference ("The life"), which hints that it is already looking toward the life of the Word that became incarnate in Jesus. Caution should be taken not to place too much emphasis on this point, however, because the article is required to identify "life" as the subject since the verb is the verb "to be" and the complement is definite. "The light" denotes the revelation that enlightens the created order and gives humanity the knowledge of God that in turn grants to life its higher quality.

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[20] E. L. Miller, *Salvation-History in the Prologue of John: The Significance of John 1:3/4* (NovTSup 60; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 51.

[21] See G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), 6; M.-É. Boismard, *Le Prologue de Saint Jean* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1953), 31–32; I. de La Potterie, "De Interpunctione et Interpretatione Versum Joh. 1:3–4," *VD* 33 (1955): 206–07; P. M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (JSNTSup 294; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 166; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972), 77.

This light shines in "the darkness" that characterizes all who live in ignorance and therefore in opposition to "the light." The opposition between light and darkness sets up the oppositional dualities of the Fourth Gospel,[22] but it is not an ontological, metaphysical, or eternal dualism. The opposition is between persons who are empowered or transformed by "the light" and those that are not. Those who are not of "the light" oppose it, but shall not overcome it.[23] These observations are important because they establish the divine identity of Jesus, the place of the cosmos as the creation of the Logos, the ultimate value of life, and the potential of human life lived in relation to its Creator through the revelation disclosed by Jesus.

The theme of life is one of the most pervasive themes in the Fourth Gospel. In the first major section, John 2–4, Jesus celebrates life at a wedding, providing a bountiful supply of wine, alludes to his resurrection in the confrontation in the temple, instructs Nicodemus on what it means to be born from above, recalls the life-giving power of the serpent Moses raised up on a pole, promises that everyone who believes in him will have everlasting life (3:16), and teaches the Samaritan woman about living water. The last paragraph of John 4 weaves together the themes of believing and living as it narrates the story of the healing of the royal official's son. We could go on to detail the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda in John 5, the feeding of the multitude in John 6 and the discourse on the bread of life, the raising of Lazarus in John 11, the parable of the seed falling into the ground (which Jan van der Watt has already treated at length),[24] the lesson of the footwashing as Jesus prepares to lay down his life for the disciples, and the imagery of Jesus' death, the handing over of the Spirit, Jesus' resurrection, and the feeding of the disciples in John 21. Wherever you are in the Gospel, you are never far from the theme of life.

Jesus' claim in John 5:17, "My Father is still working, and I also am working," is particularly relevant here. C. H. Dodd wrote a classic exposition of the debate in John 5 regarding what is permissible on the Sabbath.[25] When four rabbis were challenged as to whether God kept His own law, their response assumed that God continued to work but that God's work on the Sabbath did not violate the prescriptions for the Sabbath (*Exod. Rab.*

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[22] M. Volf, "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism," *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 189–217, esp. 190.

[23] See further my essay, "The Problem of Evil in the Gospel of John," in *Interpretation and the Claims of the Text: Resourcing New Testament Theology* (FS C. H. Talbert; ed. J. A. Whitlark; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 59–72.

[24] J. G. van der Watt, "Ethics Alive in Imagery," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (ed. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt, and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 436–45.

[25] C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 320–23. See also Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 162 (n. 2).

30:9). Philo agreed: Divine rest does not mean abstention from good deeds: "The cause of all things is by its nature active; it never ceases to work all that is best and most beautiful" (*Cher.* 87). In fact, Philo claims that it is impossible that God should rest because "God never ceases creating, but as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to be cold, so it is the property of God to create … for He causes to rest that which, though actually not in operation, is apparently making, but He Himself never ceases making" (*Leg. All.* 1.5–6). In other words, God caused inferior creative agencies to cease, while God continued to create. Elsewhere Philo modifies this claim, saying that God rests from creating mortal things (*Leg. All.* 1.16). Later rabbis followed the same line in claiming that God ceased from some things but not others. God rested from the work of creation but not from "the moral government of the universe" – *providentia ordinaria* (see above).[26] The two activities that Jesus claims the Father has given to the Son are giving life and judging (5:21–22), and both of these activities belong to the continuous work of God. Hear Dodd's comment:

> John similarly speaks of two divine activities, ζῳοποιεῖν and κρίνειν. The former is clearly a function of the creative power of God, and the latter of the kingly power …: even on the Sabbath, as always, God gives life and judges. The words which follow, καγὼ ἐργάζομαι, imply that the life-giving work which Jesus has performed on the Sabbath is an instance of the divine activity of ζῳοποίησις, and as such is exempt from the Sabbath restrictions.[27]

For our purposes, we may simply note that John signals that God's creative work is ongoing and not limited to the originating act of creation.[28]

Jesus extends the promise of a distinctive quality of life, here and now. He is therefore continuing the work of the Logos in the creation: the giving of life. Jesus says, "I came in order that they may have life and have it abundantly" (10:10), and this life comes through knowing him in all that that connotes (17:3): knowledge, love, obedience, and blessing. The incarnation, consequently, reframes God's act of creation, as Jesus goes on giving life.

II. The Giving of the Law through Moses (v. 17)

Taking the references to God's initiatives in chronological order, we will treat the giving of the law through Moses next, although it is the last of the initiatives introduced in the prologue, and we do not discount the signifi-

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[26] Ibid., 322.

[27] Ibid., 323.

[28] See further my essay, "'Children of God': Evolution, Cosmology, and Johannine Thought," in *Creation Stories in Dialogue: The Bible, Science, and Folk Traditions* (ed. R. A. Culpepper and J. G. van der Watt; BIS 139; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 27–28, where this paragraph also appears.

cance of this sequence. The prologue securely establishes the work of God through the Logos in creation and the incarnation before recognizing the role of Moses and the giving of the law. In this instance the divine action is implicit, conveyed by the use of the passive voice to avoid direct reference to God when the source of the action is clear. Moses is important in John both in connection with the expectation of a prophet like Moses and as a cipher for the law.

There are twelve references to Moses in the first nine chapters of John, and a reference in the added scene in 7:53–8:11 (8:5). Although most of these have a polemical tone and the progression climaxes in the debate with the Pharisees in John 9, Moses also serves as a reference to the authority of scripture and typologically for Jesus' functions in the Gospel.[29] Jesus fulfills the role of "the prophet like Moses" (Deut 18:15, 18), but he is also greater than Moses.[30] The prologue declares, "No one has seen God" (1:18; cf. 5:37), but Jesus affirms that the one who was with God has seen God (6:46), and those who have seen Jesus have seen the Father (14:9). These claims evoke God's words to Moses on Mt. Sinai, denying his request to see God, "You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live" (Exod 33:20). Moses did signs "so that they may believe that the Lord … has appeared to you" (Exod 4:5; cf. Exod 4:8–9, 30; 7:3). The signs Jesus does are clearly reminiscent of the signs Moses performed – changing water to blood (Exod 4:9; 7:17–19), providing manna and water in the wilderness (Exod 16:12, 15; 17:6), crossing the sea (Exod 14:21–22), speaking to the people what he had heard from God (Exod 4:12; 6:28–7:2), and providing the paschal lamb (Exod 12:46). The Mosaic overtones of the characterization of Jesus in John are therefore far richer than the few explicit references to Moses suggest.

Skipping the reference in the prologue for the moment, the first reference to Moses in the body of the Gospel comes in Philip's announcement to Nathanael that "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote" (1:45; cf. Deut 18:15, 18). The syntax of this announcement reflects a conflation of the Lukan phrase "Moses and the prophets" (Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27; cf. Luke 24:44; Acts 26:22; 28:23) and the more common "the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; Rom 3:21; cf. Matt 11:13; Luke 24:44; Acts 28:23). The awkward

[29] S. Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Techniques* (JSNTSup 229; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), esp. 74–75, 162–63.

[30] See esp. M.-É. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology* (trans. B. T. Viviano; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), esp. 22, 25–30; and the points of contact between the Father-Son relationship in John and the Septuagintal rendering of Deut 18:15–22 in P. N. Anderson, "The Having-Sent-Me Father – Aspects of Irony, Agency, and Encounter in the Father-Son Relationship," *Semeia* 85 (1999): 33–57.

resulting construction, "about whom Moses wrote in the law and the prophets (wrote)" lends emphasis to Moses' role in writing about Jesus – very probably a reference to Deut 18:15, 18 – and Moses as the lawgiver.

A typological interest emerges in the proleptic announcement that the Son of Man "must" be lifted up, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Num 21:8–9). The polemical role of the Moses references re-emerges in John 5:45–46. Moses is the one who "accuses" those who do not receive Jesus, yet ironically Moses is the one "on whom you set your hope" (5:45). The next statement is based on the principle articulated in John 1:45, that Moses wrote about Jesus. If they believed Moses, that one like him would arise in Israel, then they would believe Jesus. Since they do not receive Jesus, they do not believe what Moses wrote about him, and therefore they "do not believe Moses" (5:46). The next chapter, John 6, demonstrates that Jesus was the promised prophet like Moses. After he fed the multitude in the wilderness at Passover, the people perceived that he was "the prophet who is coming into the world" (6:14).

The next three references all specify what Moses gave Israel: bread from heaven (6:32); the law (7:19), and circumcision, the sign of the covenant (7:22). In each case John insists that it was not Moses who gave these tokens of the covenant. The Father gave the bread from heaven, the sustenance of true life, therefore not manna but Jesus, the true bread (6:32), and circumcision actually came from the patriarchs (7:22). The argument proceeds: since circumcision was allowed on the Sabbath, then how much more should they not allow Jesus to heal a man's whole body on the Sabbath since Moses gave them the law (7:19). This same issue re-emerges in the debate over Jesus' Sabbath healing of the man born blind. In the emotional climax of the confrontation between the man and the Pharisees, the religious authorities charge, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from" (9:28–29). The implication is that one must be either a disciple of Moses or Jesus' disciple, whereas Jesus has claimed that the Father who sent him also acted through Moses. It is not a forced choice between the two but a question of whether one understands Moses, and whether one recognizes Jesus.

With this survey in mind, we may turn to the declaration in the prologue that "the law was given through Moses" (1:17).[31] One first observes that foreshadowing the later references the prologue announces what was "was given" through Moses. The theme of Moses as "giver" is introduced, but also the implication that Moses is the servant of God, who is the ultimate

[31] S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975), wrote 534 pages on the law in John before turning to 1:17!

giver and the giver of grace and truth, the law, and the true bread from heaven.

Here we may pause to recognize the question of the relationship between law, grace, and truth in the prologue. The King James Version follows the translation of William Tyndale in John 1:17, inserting a gratuitous "but" between the two halves of the verse. I say "gratuitous" because there is no adversative conjunction in the Greek text: ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. The previous verse declares, "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."[32] Verse 17 opens with a causal ὅτι "for" or "because" and continues "The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The natural sense of this construction is that the law was a gift of God's grace and "grace and truth" were further grace. Both come from the Logos. On the other hand, the adversative sense, juxtaposing law and grace has both a long tradition of interpretation and some basis in the flow of the prologue toward v. 18.[33] As W. Gutbrod observed, the relationship between the Law and Jesus is not simply antithetical: "Between the law as the word of Scripture and the revelation of God in Jesus there is a positive inner connection."[34] Both are revelatory; John treats the law as "the body of divine revelation given to Moses."[35] Both are also manifestations of grace (χάρις), but the law does not give life; it bears witness to Jesus, who is the giver of life.[36] As Peter Phillips put it, v. 17 makes a distinction "between two graces/gifts of God and not two opposing systems of belief."[37]

James Dunn's challenge to interpreters to "Let John Be John," is nowhere more important than in the interpretation of the role of the law in John. As Gerhard Kittel observed, "the relation between Christ and Law is

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[32] For a review of various interpretations of "grace upon grace," see Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:16 (n. 5); and Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 212–13 (n. 21). Brown notes that the proposition ἀντί occurs only here in John and considers three interpretations: replacement, accumulation, and correspondence.

[33] For a nuancing of the adversative interpretation of v. 17 see Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 64–65, 71, 90 (n. 2); D. M. Smith, Jr., *John* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 60–61; Beutler, "Der Johannes-Prolog," 97 (n. 2).

[34] W. Gutbrod, "νόμος," *TDNT* 4:1083.

[35] Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 517 (n. 31).

[36] Gutbrod, "νόμος," 1083–84 (n. 34); cf. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 537 (n. 31); M. Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy* (WUNT 2/132; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 225.

[37] Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, 214 (n. 21). See also F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 46; and S. Brown, *Gift upon Gift: Covenant through Word in the Gospel of John* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 144; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 94, "One cannot 'replace' the other. One prolongs and perfects the never-ending graciousness of God. The gift of the Law is perfected in the gift of the incarnation."

a basic question throughout the Gospel."[38] John does not set grace over against law as Paul does. Instead, references to the law in John function to vindicate Jesus against charges brought against him by the religious authorities. It has often been noted that the discussion at the festival in Jerusalem in John 7 continues the debate over Jesus' healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath in John 5. The Mosaic law justifies Jesus' works. It is a matter of correct judgment or correct interpretation of the law, not choosing either Moses or Jesus, because Moses bears witness to Jesus. Although the people venerate Moses as the lawgiver, they do not follow the law's prescriptions (7:19). Moses gave them the rite of circumcision, and the law allows circumcision on the Sabbath (7:22). Therefore, on the basis of the principle that what is true for the lesser also valid for the greater (*Qal waḥomer*), it is also permissible to heal the man's whole body (7:23). Ironically, when the religious authorities – the chief priests and Pharisees – demean the crowd as ignorant of the law, Nicodemus confronts them with their own failure to follow legal procedure and due process by judging Jesus without first giving him a hearing (7:51). Their own law requires that charges be upheld by two witnesses (8:17; Deut 19:15). The references to "your law" in John 8:17; 10:34; and 18:31 and "their law" in 15:25 can be interpreted to mean that the law applies to "them" but not "us," which is clearly the sense when Pilate says, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law" (18:31). On the other hand, when Jesus speaks of "your law" in John 8:17 and 10:34 in the context of debate with the Ἰουδαῖοι the term drives home the inconsistency between their charge that Jesus violated the law and their failure to follow its prescriptions (the requirement of two witnesses) or note its implications (those whom God sanctifies and sends can be called "gods" or "the son of God"). Likewise, the crowd is mistaken when they stumble over Jesus' proleptic reference to his exaltation because they maintain that the law says that the Messiah will abide forever (12:34). The law, therefore, defines norms and terms that vindicate Jesus when he is ironically accused of violating the law.

The final references to the law in John draw the conclusion toward which the earlier references have been building. The conclusion is stated explicitly in Jesus' appeal to the Psalms (35:19; 69:5; cf. *Pss. Sol.* 7:1), "They hated me without a cause." Then, by ironic implication the same point is made when the Ἰουδαῖοι claim that according to their law Jesus ought to die because he claimed to be the Son of God (19:7).

Moses, as we have seen, serves two primary functions in John; he defines the role of the expected prophet like Moses and serves as a cipher for

[38] G. Kittel, "λέγω," *TDNT* 4:135.

the law.[39] In both cases, within the juridical process of the Gospel, Moses, like John the Baptist, serves as a witness for Jesus. The roles of both Moses and the law are therefore reframed when they are brought in relationship to the incarnation: they have become witnesses to Jesus.

III. The Sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6–8, 15)

John the Baptist's role is distinctly different in the Fourth Gospel. Whereas in the Synoptic Gospels John is described as a prophet in the manner of his dress and diet (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6), his message (Matt 3:7–10; Luke 3:7–14), and the claims about him (Matt 17:10–13), and even culminates the heritage of the prophets (Matt 11:11–14), the Fourth Gospel never calls John a prophet but holds that term in reserve for Jesus (see John 1:21, 25; 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40, 52; 9:17). In contrast, the prologue's references to John the Baptist are almost laboriously formulaic. First, John is introduced with striking formality: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (1:6). Jewish readers might recall the opening words of the Book of Job: "There was once a man in the land of Ur whose name was Job" (Job 1:1). The characterizing information about Job is that although he lived in the land of Uz he was "blameless" (Heb. תם, *tam*). The character defining information about John is that he was sent from God as a witness to testify to the light. Every term is significant.

God is described as sending forty-four times in John (19x with ἀποστέλλω: 1:6; 3:17, 28, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29, 42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21; cf. 9:7; and 25x with πέμπω: 1:33; 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 37; 6:38, 39, 44; 7:16, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:20; 14:24, 26; 15:21; 16:5). All of these references are to God or the Father sending Jesus except for 1:6, 33; and 3:28, which refer to God's sending the Baptist and 14:26, which refers to the Father's sending the Paraclete. That ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω are used synonymously in John is confirmed by observing the close parallel between John 17:18 and 20:21, where the former has ἀπέστειλα and the latter has πέμπω in the second part of the statement.

καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, κἀγὼ ἀπέστειλα αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν κόσμον· (17:18)
καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. (20:21)

On the other hand, Rengstorf noted that John uses these common terms in a particular way to make a subtle point in its Christology. Jesus regularly

[39] See Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 360–62 (n. 2), who defines both negative and positive functions of Moses in John.

speaks of God as the One who πέμψας με, but "God is never called ὁ ἀπ-έστειλας με."[40] Rengstorf explains this peculiarity as follows:

> In John's Gospel ἀποστέλλειν is used by Jesus when His concern is to ground His authority in that of God as the One who is responsible for His words and works and who guarantees their right and truth. On the other hand, He uses the formula ὁ πέμψας με (πατήρ) to affirm the participation of God in His work in the *actio* of His sending.[41]

The nature of the sending is such that the one sent does the work(s) of the sender (5:36; 6:29; 9:4), speaks the words given by the sender (3:34; 7:16; 8:26; 12:49; 14:24), bears witness to the sender (8:18), and brings glory to the sender (7:18). The Hebrew understanding of the שְׁלִיחַ (*shaliaḥ*) is clearly evident here: "the one sent by a man is as the man himself" (*m. Ber.* 5:5); that is, the one sent is as good as the sender "in all that he says and does in execution of his commission."[42] These Johannine formulations are distinctive, however, in that Jesus was not just sent in order that the world might believe in the One who sent him (with a form of πέμπω, 5:24), or believe in the one who was sent (6:29, ἀπέστειλεν), but that they might believe/know that Jesus had been sent (ἀπέστειλας) by the Father. This feature of the sending theme comes to full expression in John 17:

> so that they may believe that you sent me. (11:42)
> and they have believed that you sent me. (17:8)
> so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (17:21)
> so that the world may know that you have sent me. (17:23)
> and these know that you have sent me. (17:25)[43]

These statements lie at the core of the Johannine Christology that portrays Jesus as the one sent by the Father.[44] This excursus into John's theology enables us to make several observations that are not immediately apparent to a reader of the Gospel. (1) Only John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Paraclete are described as having been sent by God. (2) The same is not said to Abraham, Moses, or the prophets. (3) Curiously, while it is imperative that one believes that Jesus was sent by God, the same is not said for John. Instead all the emphasis is placed on his testimony to Jesus' identity. (4) John's role is narrowly defined: he was sent to bear witness to the light

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[40] K. H. Rengstorf, "ἀπόστολος," *TDNT* 1:404.

[41] Ibid., 1:405.

[42] Ibid., 1:415.

[43] The previous paragraph is adapted from my essay, "Designs for the Church in John 20,19–23," in *Studies in the Gospel of John and Its Christology: Festschrift for Gilbert van Belle* (ed. J. Verheyden et al.; BETL 265; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 506–07.

[44] See Meyer, "'The Father'," 263–64 (n. 10); and Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 92–98 (n. 10).

(1:7, 8) and to baptize in water (1:33). That John baptized in water is reported (1:25, 26, 33; 3:23; 10:40), but John does not report that Jesus was baptized, only that John saw the Spirit descend upon him (1:32). On the other hand, (5) John's testimony to Jesus is reported every time John appears in the Gospel. John's mission and everything he says is subsumed under the rubric of "witness" (μαρτυρία/μαρτυρεῖν), which is repeated three times in vv. 6–8 and again in v. 15 – the first of 47 occurrences of words with this root in John. Fourteen of these occurrences describe John's role as a witness in the few verses in which he appears in the Gospel (1:7 [2x], 8, 15, 19, 32, 34; 3:26; 5:32 [3x], 33, 34, 36; cf. 3:28). John's testimony further confirms many of the key elements of Jesus' identity and mission: he was the light (1:7–8), he was before John and was greater than John (1:15),[45] the Spirit abided with him (1:32–33), he would baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:33), he was the lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (1:29, 36), he was the Son of God (1:34), and he was the bridegroom – (3:28–30).[46]

More than its specific content John's role as witness for Jesus introduces the juridical theme that pervades the Gospel. This theme becomes explicit in the latter part of John 5, where Jesus cites the witnesses on his behalf: John the Baptist, Jesus' works, the Father, the scriptures, and Moses (5:33–47).[47] The charges against Jesus are that he violated the Sabbath and blasphemed by making himself equal to God (5:16, 18). As Anthony E. Harvey and Andrew T. Lincoln have shown, the trial of Jesus is not confined to the hearing before the religious authorities and the trial before Pilate but extends through much of the Gospel.[48] Martin Asiedu-Peprah then interpreted

[45] T. Thatcher has provocatively argued that John 1:15 "may be regarded as the genesis of the Prologue" in his essay "The Riddle of the Baptist and the Genesis of the Prologue," in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (ed. A. Le Donne and T. Thatcher; LNTS 426; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 30.

[46] A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 62. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 36, 59 (n. 2), extends John's witness, arguing that all of 1:15–18 should be taken as John's witness to Jesus.

[47] See A. D. Myers, "'Jesus Said to Them …': The Adaptation of Juridical Rhetoric in John 5:19–47," *JBL* 132 (2013): 415–30; J. D. Atkins, "The Trial of the People and the Prophet: John 5:30–47 and the True and False Prophet Traditions," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 279–96.

[48] A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976); Lincoln, *Truth on Trial* (n. 46). Among other earlier works, Lincoln, *Truth on Trial*, 4–6, cites J. Blank, *Krisis: Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg: Lambertus, 1964); J. M. Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); J. Beutler, *Martyria* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1972); Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel* (n. 31); and A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

the Sabbath conflicts as a juridical controversy,[49] and George Parsenios connected this motif with the two senses of seeking in John, misunderstanding, recognition, and the evidential function of the signs.[50] By introducing John the Baptist as a witness, therefore, the prologue anticipates the importance of the trial motif in the rest of the Gospel.

IV. The Coming of the Light (v. 9)/ the Incarnation of the Logos (v. 14)

The Incarnation is clearly the central theme of both the prologue and the Gospel. Here we will consider only two points related to this all-encompassing theme: (1) the points at which the prologue speaks of the incarnation, and (2) Jesus' mission as the incarnate Logos.

The point or points at which the prologue first refers to the incarnation have been sharply debated. Here we may recall the positions of the giants of Johannine scholarship in the mid-twentieth century because they defined the classic positions. Käsemann affirmed the interpretation of the Church Fathers that "the portrayal of Jesus Christ as appearing in history begins at v. 5" and that "vv. 5 and 9ff. are concerned with the revelation of Jesus in history."[51] Whereas Haenchen held that v. 5 speaks of "the fruitless activity of the Logos in the generations prior to the incarnation of the Logos,"[52] Bultmann claimed that while the source spoke of the pre-existent Logos in vv. 9–12, in the prologue the Incarnation of the Logos, which is stated in v. 14, is "hinted" in v. 5a.[53] Dodd agreed that vv. 9–13 speak of the work of the pre-incarnate Logos in the history of Israel but also in the world,[54] and on another level "the whole passage from v. 4 is *at once* an account of the relations of the Logos with the world, *and* an account of the ministry of Jesus Christ, which in every essential particular reproduces those relations."[55] Schnackenburg's interpretation is also characteristically nuanced,

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Lincoln, however, is the first to treat this theme from the perspective of narrative criticism.

[49] Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy*, 234 (n. 36).

[50] G. L. Parsenios, *Rhetoric and Drama in the Johannine Lawsuit Motif* (WUNT 258; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 49–128.

[51] E. Käsemann, *New Testament Questions* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1969), 144, 146.

[52] E. Haenchen, *John*, Vol. 1 (trans. R. W. Funk; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 115.

[53] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 64.

[54] Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 270–71 (n. 25).

[55] Ibid., 284.

finding that the present tense of the verb in v. 5 shows that the evangelist's "meditation in v. 5 extends to the present time (φαίνει). The assertion is then concerned both with the historical coming of the Logos into the world and the time of the evangelist," while in the underlying hymn v. 9 "certainly referred to the order of creation, that is, to the Logos before his incarnation."[56] Brown took a more categorical position: "The third strophe of the original hymn [vss. 10–12b] seems to deal with the Word incarnate in the ministry of Jesus."[57] As we shall see in the next section, the empowering of those who believe to become children of God in v. 12 requires in Brown's judgment that these verses speak of the consequence of Jesus' ministry.[58] Here interpreters face a distinct crux. Does the universal vision of v. 9, where the true light "enlightens everyone (ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον)," continue through v. 12, affirming that those who accepted the preincarnate Logos and "believed in his name" were given the power to become children of God? In the coming chapters John speaks of believing in the name of Jesus: "many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing" (2:23), and "but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (3:18). On the other hand, in John 17, whose parallels with the prologue have often been noted, Jesus declares that he has made God's name known to the disciples (17:6, 26). The references to believing in Jesus' name stand closer to the prologue, however, and echo its language more closely, favoring the view that vv. 9–12 speak of the incarnation. If one finds a chiastic structuring of the prologue persuasive, the structure proposed by M.-É. Boismard makes vv. 9–10 parallel with v. 14 in the chiasm.[59]

My view, therefore, is that v. 5 speaks of the conflict between light and darkness that has existed from the beginning. From the latter part of v. 4 through v. 9, the prologue begins to use "light" metaphorically in reference to Jesus, the incarnate Logos, but does not make this explicit. With v. 9 the coming of the light into the world is announced – not in reference to the work of the Logos in the history of Israel, but in the incarnation. The world's failure to recognize him in v. 10 restates the opposition evident in v. 5. Verses 11–12 articulate the responses to the revelation of the light. They also serve as summations of the two parts of the Gospel: Jesus'

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[56] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:245, 253 (n. 3).

[57] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:28 (n. 5).

[58] Ibid., 29.

[59] M.-É. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue* (trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans; London: Blackfriars, 1957); idem, *Moses or Jesus*, 91 (n. 30); R. A. Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1981): 13–14, 16.

ministry in the world (John 1–12) and his empowering of those who received him (John 13–21).

The larger question concerns the nature of Jesus' mission as the incarnate Logos. The various statements about Jesus' mission can be grouped according to whether they address his relationship to God, the world, or the theme of life. In relation to God, Jesus speaks what he has seen and heard from the Father (3:32; 6:46; 8:26, 38, 40; 15:15). He has made God known (1:18), so that those who have seen him have seen the Father who sent him (14:9). Jesus continues the work his Father is doing (5:17, 25–26). As Marianne Meye Thompson put it: "The Father's work and prerogative are to grant life, and, because he grants this prerogative to the Son, the Son participates in the Father's work."[60] To the Father, he says, "I have glorified you on earth" (17:4). "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world" (17:6; cf. 17:14, 26). He does the will of the One who sent him (5:30; 6:38; 8:28), which is eschatological – that he should lose nothing that is given to him but raise it up on the last day (6:39).

In relation to the world, John the Baptist testifies that he was the lamb of God sent to take away the sin of the world (1:29, 36), that the Spirit abides with him, and that he will baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:33). In turn, Jesus himself explains, "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (3:17). Because he is the light of the world, those who follow him will have the light of life (8:12; cf. 12:46). Likewise, Jesus affirms to the man born blind, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind" (9:39).

Jesus also continues the work of the Logos in relationship to the ultimate end of giving life. The Spirit with which he baptizes is essential if one is going to be born from above (1:33; 3:5). The words he speaks are "Spirit and life" (6:57). In contrast to the thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy, Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (10:10; cf. 10:28). To Martha he affirms, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25), and to the disciples he says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6).

The giving of life, however, requires Jesus' faithfulness to his mission, even to the point of death. As he faces the hour of his death, he resolutely states, "it is for this reason that I have come to this hour" (12:27). The events surrounding Jesus' death convey to the attentive reader that through his "exaltation" Jesus as "king" will draw all people to himself (12:32),

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[60] Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 78 (n. 10); also idem, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 142.

and they will constitute a new family as "children of God" (1:12; 11:52).[61] Jesus' death, therefore, fulfills "all things": the scriptures, all that the Father gave him to do, and his mission to reveal the Father and take away "the sins of the world" (1:29, 36).

Again, the continuity between the work of the Logos in creation and Jesus' work as the incarnate Logos in giving life should not be missed. This theme is further articulated, and indeed brought to its fullest expression in the prologue in the fifth of the prologue's divine initiatives: giving power to those who believe to become "children of God."

V. The Birth of the Children of God (vv. 12–13)

In one of my first articles I extended Boismard's analysis of the chiastic structure of the prologue, which found that the prologue turns on vv. 12–13.[62] English translations often mask the structure of these verses by changing the sequence of the phrases in v. 12 and thereby displacing the affirmation "he gave them power to become children of God" from its pivotal position. Compare, for example, the NRSV with the Greek:

[11] He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
[12] But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,
[13] who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. (NRSV)

A [11] εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
B [12] ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν,
C ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι,
B τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ,
A [13] οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.

The Revidierte Lutherbibel (1984) preserves the sequence of clauses in this verse, translating it, "Wie viele ihn aber aufnahmen, denen gab er Macht, Gottes Kinder zu werden, denen, die an seinen Namen glauben."

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[61] See my essay, "The Theology of the Johannine Passion Narrative: John 19:16b–30," *Neot* 31 (1997): 21–37; J. Zumstein, "Johannes 19,25–27," *ZTK* 94 (1997): 131–54; reprinted in his *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (Zurich: Pano, 1999), 156–77; and M. L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), 188, who comments, "This scene depicts the promise of divine filiation when believers, represented by the Beloved Disciple, will be incorporated through the Spirit, into the sonship of Jesus."

[62] Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," 1–31 (n. 59). See, recently, Brown, *Gift upon Gift*, 80–82 (n. 37).

Revisiting my argument, I contend that the construction of these verses is too precise to be incidental. οἱ ἴδιοι in v. 11 is succeeded by οἵ in v. 13 who are born of God. In the first and third clauses in v. 12, those "who received him" in v. 12a is clarified by "those who believed in his name" in v. 12c, leaving the significant claim to identity, and the promises to Israel in v. 12b, in the climactic, pivotal position in the chiasm: "he gave power to become children of God."

The argument from the structure of these verses is complemented both by the significance of this claim in relation to the scriptures and the Jewish context of the Gospel and by its thematic development later in the Gospel. It is related to John's emphasis on becoming, to the theme of life, and to the Johannine community's relationship to the synagogue and the promises of the Hebrew scriptures.

John clearly maintains that human life is dynamic. The opening verses of the prologue speak of what came to be in him. It also affirms that human beings are capable of change, of "becoming": "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to *become* children of God" (1:12).[63] Behind all of the dialogues in John are two assumptions: (1) that human beings can change, and (2) that attaining their full potential as persons depends on their perceiving that Jesus is the Son of God, sent from above. Perceptions of revelation and responses of faith define them as new beings. Through the agency of the Spirit they can be born from above and attain a new status and quality of life, which John identifies as their becoming "children of God" (1:12; 11:52). The metaphor is developed as the Gospel progresses. Nicodemus struggles to understand the meaning of being born "again" or "from above" (3:1–12). This life from above is sustained by living water and "the bread of life," so Jesus promises the woman at the well in Samaria "living water" (4:10), "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:14). Similarly, Jesus offers the crowd in Galilee "food that endures for eternal life" (6:27). Jesus will draw all people to himself (12:32), and as he dies he figuratively constitutes a new family, mother and son, at the cross (19:26–27). In this connection, it may be significant that after his resurrection Jesus sends Mary Magdalene to tell "my brothers" that he was ascending to "my Father and your Father, my God and your God" (20:17).[64]

Bultmann noted that "above all the notion that men are related to God as his children develops into an 'eschatological' concept both in Judaism and

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[63] Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 186 (n. 10), also interprets γίνομαι in 1:12 as referring to "a progressive state of being." See his full discussion of this verse on pp. 178–88.

[64] This paragraph is from my essay, "'Children of God': Evolution, Cosmology, and Johannine Thought," 28 (n. 28).

in the Mystery religions … It is clear that in John τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ γενέσθαι is intended in such an 'eschatological' sense."[65] The repetition of the phrase "children of God" in John 11:52 in conjunction with the echo of Isaiah's promise of gathering the outcasts of Israel confirms the eschatological overtones of the promise of empowerment. The restoration of Israel would be the signal for the nations to come to Jerusalem. Isaiah declared, "Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered" (Isa 56:8), and "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa 56:7). Then, near the end of the book, the prophet records the words, "I am coming to gather all the nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory" (Isa 66:18). Micah shares this vision and looks forward to the day when "peoples shall stream to the temple, saying, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways'" (Mic 4:1–2). *Psalms of Solomon* looks forward to the fulfillment of this promise: "And he will purge Jerusalem (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning, (for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her" (17:30–31; *OTP* 2:667).[66]

John announces that the Word became flesh, "and we have beheld his glory" (1:14). Those who believe in him are given authority as "children of God" (1:12), and part of Jesus' work as the Revealer is to gather the children of God who have been scattered:

> I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (10:16)
>
> [Caiaphas] prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. (11:52)
>
> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. (12:32; cf. 21:11)

In a careful recent study of the theme of the restoration of Israel in John, John A. Dennis contends that the concept of "the children of God" is thoroughly restorational and that the Fourth Gospel "is centered squarely on *Jewish* concerns," so he quotes approvingly Barrett's comment that in a Jewish document John 11:52b would mean, "the gathering together of the

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[65] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 58 (n. 53). The following four paragraphs were first published in my essay, "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. C. R. Koester and R. Bieringer; WUNT 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 253–76.

[66] Regarding Jewish expectations about Gentiles, see further J. A. Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel* (WUNT 217; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 303–06.

dispersed Israelites to their own land in the messianic age."[67] Nevertheless, as Dennis notes, Barrett went on to say, "It is however unlikely that John was thinking of the gathering of dispersed Christians at the last day, but rather the gathering of men into the church, the *one* body of Christ (cf. 17.21 …)."[68] Dennis interprets the conflict with the synagogue as an intra-Jewish debate and therefore reads the gathering of the children of God primarily as a gathering of believing Jews. The gathering of believers from the nations is secondary. He argues that John 11:52b should be translated, "… Jesus had to die for the nation and not for the nation only but in order that he might *also* gather into one the children of God who are dispersed."[69] Taking a different view, I have interpreted the conflict with the synagogue as the separation of Johannine believers from the synagogue and the time when the Johannine community was established as a distinctly Christian community that was defining itself over against its Jewish origins.[70] John 1:12 redefines the "children of God" as those who believe in Jesus' name. As a self-designation for the Johannine community, it includes both Jewish and Gentile believers. Accordingly, John 11:52 looks not only to the mission to Israel (the ἔθνος) but to Gentiles also.

Related references underscore the importance of the community's witness to Gentiles: the reception of Jesus by the Samaritans and their confession that he was "the Savior of the world" (4:42), the ironic misunderstanding that Jesus was going to the Dispersion "and teach Greeks" (7:35), the Greeks' request to see Jesus (12:20–21), the inscription of the τίτλος on the cross in three languages (19:20), and perhaps the symbolism of the 153 large fish (21:11). In these various ways the Gospel of John recognizes the eschatological role of Jesus as the Messiah who would gather the children of God from all nations. While that gathering was not complete, it began in the ministry of Jesus, was represented at the crucifixion, and – as imaged in the great catch of fish (21:1–14) – continued in the work of the disciples following the resurrection. What the prophet Isaiah looked forward to in the future had already begun in the ministry of the Revealer and was being accomplished in the mission of the church. It was no longer a future expectation therefore but a reality already in process. Once more, the announcement of the incarnation in the prologue has reframed the meaning of a traditional concept.

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[67] Ibid., 293, quoting C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 407.

[68] Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 407 (n. 67).

[69] Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel*, 258 (n. 66).

[70] See my essay, "Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel as a Problem for Christian Interpreters," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Assen, The Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 68–91.

In passing we may also note the connection between the theme of becoming "children of God" and the characterization of Nicodemus. The stage is set for Nicodemus's introduction into the Gospel by the immediately preceding verses, 2:23–25. Here the narrator reports that many in Jerusalem "believed in his name" because they saw the signs that he was doing. This phrase echoes the norm set in the prologue for those who were authorized to become children of God (1:12). Then, through Nicodemus, John explores the question of how one moves from the flesh to the Spirit, from below to above, the world to the Kingdom of God, this life to eternal life – a question to which responses are given throughout the Gospel.[71]

VI. Synthesis

Our review of the five divine initiatives described in the prologue yields both expected and surprising results. Not surprising is the observation that approaching the prologue with the issue of divine initiatives in mind leads to a fresh appreciation for the importance and consistency of God's initiatives in relation to creation and humanity in the Gospel of John. The prologue offers a breathtaking vista of God's work in the world from the beginning of time to the full realization of God's purposes. The anticipated fulfillment of God's initiatives will result in all those who respond to the light and life in the incarnate Logos becoming "children of God." Along the way we have noted how the Gospel describes the work of the Logos in creation, and specifically in the creation of life. The theme of life that originates in the act of creation becomes a major theme in the Gospel.[72]

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[71] See M. L. Coloe, "Leadership in a Time of Crisis: Re-evaluating Nicodemus (John 3.1–10)," in *Ancient and Christian Texts as Crisis Management Literature* (ed. D. C. Sim and P. Allen; LNTS 445; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 95–111; C. R. Koester, "Theological Complexity and the Characterization of Nicodemus in John's Gospel," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. C. W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 165–81; and my essay, "Nicodemus: The Travail of New Birth," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. S. A. Hunt, D. F. Tolmie, and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 249–59, which concludes (259), "Nicodemus remains, appropriately, identified with the complexity of becoming one of the 'children of God,' for whom both belief in his name and birth from above are required."

[72] Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 149 (n. 25), claims that "for John this present enjoyment of eternal life has become the controlling and all-important conception"; and J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 219, n. 28, states that "life is the symbol round which all the others cluster," though we might debate whether "life" is a symbol or a theme, motif, or concept in John. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 80 (n. 10), adds: "God is the living and life-giving Creator, who exercises sovereignty over all life, from creation to final redemption. The work

Jesus' work as the incarnate Logos is perhaps best subsumed under his statement, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (10:10), as his works and sayings throughout the Gospel confirm.

The work of giving life, however, never proceeds without opposition. The opposition of darkness to light has characterized the response to God's initiatives from the beginning. This opposition is characterized in the prologue and in the rest of the Gospel figuratively as a legal process or trial in which there are witnesses, some who have seen the light and some who have not, and standards by which the accused should be judged. Moses, the giver of the law, testifies on Jesus' behalf. The law excuses him. All that Jesus does is in accord with it, and he fulfills the expectation of a "prophet like Moses." John the Baptist also bears witness to Jesus, and his testimony is true (10:41).

Jesus' signs as well as his claims and revelatory words establish that in him the creative Logos continued its work in the world, creating, sustaining, revealing, and redeeming. The boundaries or penumbra between light and darkness are shifting. Individuals like Nicodemus struggle to embrace the light. Others embrace it without fully understanding, or receive the light only to falter. The transformation of persons is a dynamic and continuing process as they *become* children of God. Similarly, the work of "saving" the world through the Son (3:17) continues as witness is borne, responses are made, light dawns, and the Son "draws all people to himself" (12:32).

This overview has explored how the prologue serves as the theological prolegomenon to the Gospel, introducing and reframing the five divine initiatives in its sweeping overview of God's work in the world. The prologue sets the Gospel's presentation of Jesus as the incarnate Logos in the context of three earlier divine initiatives (creation, giving of the law, and the sending of John the Baptist – which move from the universal to the particular) and the future hope that those created in the image of God and called to be God's people will realize their role as children of God. As Bultmann observed, the prologue is comprehensible only to one who knows the whole Gospel.[73] Its relationship to the themes and theology of the Gospel is such that it becomes increasingly clear that the prologue provides readers of the Gospel with the theological framework that is needed to understand the significance of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection as it is understood in the rest of the Gospel, and especially its images, ironies, misunderstandings, and interrelated themes.

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of creation, the universal sovereignty over creation, and its expected final redemption are all carried on in the Gospel through the Son, and they are all expressed in terms of life."

[73] Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 13 (n. 53); Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 296–399, 438–93 (n. 2).

In conclusion, it has become apparent that the prologue serves as a "touchstone" for the interpretation of the Gospel. This colorful word designates "a type of black stone formerly used to test the purity of gold or silver by the streak left on it when it was rubbed with the metal."[74] If the prologue is not an extraneous writing or secondary addition to the Gospel, then the theology of the Gospel must be measured against it. The theological themes and concepts introduced in the prologue and developed subsequently in the Gospel form the core of Johannine thought.

[74] *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English* (3d college edition; V. E. Neufeldt, editor in chief; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 1414.

Really a Prologue?

John Ashton

The most fundamental question concerning the first eighteen verses of the Gospel of John is whether the traditional title, Prologue, can be exegetically justified. On the very first page of his splendid commentary, after the long introduction, Michael Theobald writes of *der sogenannte Prolog*.[1] True, his hesitation proceeds solely from his conviction that the real opening of the Gospel is the whole of the first chapter, which he refers to as a *großräumiges Diptychon* – an exceedingly spacious diptych; and a couple of pages further on he allows that there are good grounds for the name *Pro-logos*. Nevertheless it still may be asked whether verses originally composed as a hymn to the Logos are a proper introduction to a narrative in which the Logos is never mentioned, and where there is not even a hint of the idea that forms the climax of the hymn, the startlingly novel concept of incarnation. In no respect, moreover, does the Prologue perform the usual function of a preface or introduction, which is to summarize the content of what follows.

In this opening paragraph I have already declared my allegiance to what I will call the H camp – scholars who, following Adolf Harnack,[2] believe that the Prologue was built round a previously existing composition generally known as the Logos-hymn, and that at some point the evangelist substituted this for an earlier introduction to his Gospel. The other camp (I will call it the B camp – B for Barrett) consists of those who maintain that the evangelist himself wrote the entire Prologue for the express purpose of furnishing a proper introduction to all that follows. Between these two is a smaller group of scholars who, whilst admitting the basic truth of the Harnack hypothesis, think that the Prologue is the first and only introduction

[1] M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 108. In this respect he agrees with C. H. Dodd, who refers to the whole of ch. 1 as "The Proem: Prologue and Testimony," in idem, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 292.

[2] A. Harnack, "Über das Verhältniß des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZTK* 2 (1892): 189–231.

to the Gospel, and that the evangelist wrote it round the Logos-hymn because he saw this to be the key to his own work.

There are two points of agreement between the three groups. First there is their recognition that vv. 6–8 and 15, commonly called the "Baptist" verses (although John is never called the Baptist in this Gospel) purposely anticipate what follows. (This, however, is no answer to the difficulties outlined in my first paragraph, because the link established by these verses goes no further than chapter 1.) Secondly there is a shared conviction that the central concept of the Prologue, the Logos, is directly reflected in the remainder of the Gospel. If not, why is it there at all? For the most part this conviction amounts to no more than an intuition, a gut feeling neither articulated nor argued, but simply taken for granted.[3] It is a conviction, however, that I share, and the main purpose of this paper is to give it exegetical justification. I will devote the first section of my paper to exposing the flaws in what seem to me to be some inadequate defenses of this fundamental intuition; but before doing so I want to refer briefly to the work of two of the most admired twentieth-century writers on the Gospel, Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd, both of whom share the basic conviction that the key to the Gospel is to be found in what the latter calls "the Logos-doctrine."

According to Dodd, "the Logos-doctrine is placed first, because, addressing a public nurtured in the higher religion of Hellenism, the writer wishes to offer the Logos-idea as the appropriate approach, for them, to the central purpose of the Gospel, through which he may lead them to the

[3] E.g. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco: Word, 1987), 5: "a directive to the reader how the entire Gospel should be understood"; U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 10, remarks: "Der Prolog … dient als Lektüreanweisung für die Leser, indem er das vom Evangelisten beabsichtigte Verstehen des Folgenden vorbereitet und prägt"; M. W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994); B. Witherington III, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1995), 47, notes: "a key for the hearer or reader to understand what follows"; H. N. Ridderbos, *Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997), 17, sees it as "a splendidly constructed a priori introduction to the story"; M. D. Hooker, *Beginnings: Keys That Open the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1997), 65: "if you are so foolish as to begin reading the story at 1:19 you will have thrown away the key to what follows"; R. A. Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 109, also regards it as, "the key to understanding all that will follow"; A. T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St John* (BNTC; London/New York: Hendrickson, 2005), 108–09, remarks: "readers are being equipped from the start to be able to share the narrator's guiding perspective"; H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 64, also opines that the prologue "eines literarischen Werkes die Lektüre der gesamten ihm folgenden evangelischen Erzählung … bestimmen soll."

historical actuality of its story."[4] Bultmann, unlike most others, recognizes that "the Prologue is no introduction or foreword in the ordinary sense of the words," for "there is no indication in it of the content or structure of what follows."[5] Yet even so he has no hesitation in declaring that "the theme of the Gospel is stated in the ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο,"[6] a declaration that is demonstrably false, since there is no trace in the body of the Gospel (or indeed anywhere else in the Bible apart from 1 and 2 John) of the strange idea of incarnate wisdom, the λόγος ἔνσαρκος or the λόγος σεσαρκωμένος.[7]

I. Some False Routes

A small number of scholars do attempt to defend the view that the Prologue prepares readers for what follows, and is intended to do so. A close examination of their arguments will give us a better idea of the nature of the problem.

First let us look at Charles Kingsley Barrett's defense of the thesis in his Ethel M. Wood lecture, "The Prologue of St John's Gospel," delivered in February, 1970. One reason why Barrett's work is particularly interesting is that the narrative critics (who now dominate what I have called the B group) joined in the game too late for him to have come across them when he delivered this lecture. He begins by expounding a number of earlier theories – those of Bultmann and Käsemann in some detail, and then another half-dozen attempts to reconstruct the original hymn, summed up in Raymond Brown's recently published commentary. Barrett rejects them all.

At the time he gave his lecture most Johannine scholars agreed with Harnack and, somewhat later, Rendel Harris,[8] in holding that some kind of wisdom hymn had been adapted as the basis of the Prologue we now have. In setting out to disprove this theory Barrett starts by showing that there was no agreement concerning the verses in the Prologue that should be

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[4] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 296 (n. 1).

[5] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1971), 13.

[6] Ibid., 64. He returns to this theme at several points in his commentary; pp. 151, 468, 631, 632, 634, 659.

[7] Scholars are surely right to find in the second phrase of 1:14, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, an intentional allusion to Sir 24:8, where Wisdom, soon to be identified with the Law (24:23), says, "The one who created me (ὁ κτίσας με) assigned a place for my tent (σκηνή) [also *tabernacle*]. And he said, 'Make your dwelling (κατασκήνωσον) [*Tabernacle*] in Jacob.'" But there is no question of the law taking flesh.

[8] J. R. Harris, "The Origin of the Prologue to John's Gospel," *Expositor* 12 (1916): 147–70, 314–20, 388–400, 415–26.

assigned to the hymn. Nor was there any agreement about the language of the hymn: some thought it was Aramaic, others Greek. Virtually the only point of unanimity was that vv. 6–8 and 15, which deal with the witness of the Baptist, were prose insertions in a poetical Prologue.

This is where Barrett begins his own argument: "Let us see how we fare if, instead of treating them as later supplements, looked at last (if looked at at all), we begin with them."[9] He contends that what the Prologue says about John in vv. 6–8 is a summary of the extended treatment in chapters 1, 3, and 4, and that "in 1:15 later material is quoted in an awkward manner which evidently presupposes that the reader of the Prologue must be familiar with the narrative that follows: This is he of whom I said, He who comes after me has come to be before me, for he was before me."[10] He concludes that this is how the author succeeds in placing the subsequent narrative in an intelligible setting. "This means that the 'Baptist' verses were not an afterthought, but part of a serious, connected, thought-out, theological purpose." Then, a little later, comes the decisive move in the argument:

> If this is the origin and the meaning of the "Baptist" verses in the Prologue it is reasonable to suppose that this will also be the origin and meaning of the rest; that is, that, as these verses were designed to bring out the theological significance of the story of the Baptist, so the Prologue as a whole was designed to bring out the theological significance of the history of Jesus … The evangelist knows that however indispensable the figure of the Baptist may be … he is not the *beginning* of the Gospel.[11]

I have three comments to make on this argument.

1. Earlier in his lecture, Barrett had observed: "We may ask whether there are breaks in sense, which would lead us to suspect the activity of a more or less intelligent editor; but this is a matter of exegesis."[12] By deliberately commencing his own discussion not at v. 1 but at v. 6, which is precisely where other scholars had in fact noticed a break in sense, he is ducking the obligation to answer his own question.

2. Much of what he says about the "Baptist" verses is true, but none of it counters or disproves the widespread theory that vv. 6–8 were inserted into an already existing hymn, and that 1:15 was roughly copied from 1:30.

3. In moving from what he had shown was probably the purpose of the "Baptist" verses to the assertion "that this will also be the origin and meaning of the rest," Barrett is assuming what he was setting out to prove. He offers no convincing explanation of the quite exceptional nature of all that is said here concerning the Logos. This, unlike what he calls the "Baptist"

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[9] C. K. Barrett, *The Prologue of St John's Gospel* (London: Athlone, 1971), 18.
[10] Ibid., 22–23.
[11] Ibid., 23, 24.
[12] Ibid., 17.

verses, has no direct parallel elsewhere in the Gospel. The Logos itself, the undisputed subject of the Prologue, vanishes from sight when it is over, and never reappears.

In the second edition of his commentary, published seven years after this lecture, Barrett goes even further: "If the Prologue was intended to express in eighteen verses the theological content of twenty chapters a good deal of condensation was necessary; and much of John's Christology is condensed in the word λόγος."[13] This *if*-clause, it must be said, is nothing but an unargued assumption. I have already pointed out that the word λόγος occurs nowhere else in the Gospel in the sense it has in the Prologue. How is it possible to move from the use of this single word to the complex Christology of the body of the Gospel, where there is not so much as a hint of incarnation, and Jesus' entry into the world is always referred to either as a descent (as Son of Man) or a mission?

A very different defense of the theory that the Prologue was composed to introduce the Gospel is to be found in James Dunn's article, "Let John be John," first published in 1983.[14] Dunn proceeds on what I believe to be the correct assumption that "*the task of setting John in its historical context must be given a place of priority* in any inquiry into the gospel and the fourth Gospel."[15] And he is also right to observe that in pursuing this task "it is *the context of late first-century Judaism* which must have first claim on our attention."[16] But is he right to say that the Prologue gives us the clue to the evangelist's distinctive Christology? I think not.

Dunn finds it "impossible to regard the prologue … as redactional (i.e. added after the fourth evangelist put the Gospel into its present form); the themes of the prologue are too closely integrated into the Gospel as a whole and are so clearly intended to introduce these themes that such a conclusion is rendered implausible."[17]

Read uncritically, his arguments may look quite cogent. He is certainly right to note the close resemblance of John's Logos to the figure of Wisdom

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[13] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 151. In his article, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1980–81): 2, n. 5, R. A. Culpepper gives a list of other scholars who affirm the unity of the Prologue: Eltester, Lamarche, Irgoin, Ridderbos, Borgen, Hooker, Fenton, F. W. Schlatter, Van den Bussche, to which one might add the names of Culpepper himself, Léon-Dufour, Berger, Ruckstuhl, and (as we shall see) J. Neyrey and J. Zumstein.

[14] J. D. G. Dunn, "Let John be John," in *The Gospel and the Gospels* (ed. P. Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 293–322.

[15] Ibid., 295 (emphasis in the original).

[16] Ibid., 303 (emphasis in the original).

[17] Ibid., 313, n. 78. There is some confusion here, because the Gospel in its present form *includes* the Prologue. And there is no reason why an introduction added after the rest of the work has been completed should not echo and reflect most of its main themes. Many operatic overtures do just that, and many literary prefaces too.

in the Old Testament, "distinct from all other potential intermediaries (…) by virtue of *its precosmic existence with God* …, and precisely by virtue of *its close identity with God*."[18] But he is surely wrong to find echoes of this tradition in "the idea of being sent or descending from heaven." The ideas of mission and descent (two ideas, not one) are indeed found in the Gospel, the first associated with the Son, the second with the Son of Man. But neither of them occurs in the Prologue or, for that matter, in the Jewish wisdom tradition. Moreover the "I am" statements, to which Dunn also appeals, though they can be matched by instances of self-declaration in the wisdom literature, have no obvious connection with these.

So when Dunn concludes that it is precisely because "the Son is the incarnate Logos, God in his 'knowability' and 'visibility,' that the Son can say, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father' (12:45; 14:9),"[19] he is assuming, like Barrett before him, what he needs to prove. He is confident that the key to John's distinctive Christology is to see the titles, Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man "primarily as *an elaboration of the initial explicit identification of Jesus as the incarnate Wisdom/Logos*." But this is another *petitio principii*. All these titles are drawn from Jewish traditions that have nothing to do with wisdom. As Jean Zumstein concludes, at the end of his own discussion of the Prologue, any hope of finding a summary of the Gospel's theology in the Logos hymn is illusory.[20]

Jerome Neyrey, in his 2007 commentary, shows no interest in the long-standing and widely held belief that the Prologue is built around a wisdom hymn. He refers to this theory in the past tense: "*When* scholars argued that the prologue was a wisdom hymn …" Since that time, he implies, things have changed: "*Now* scholars stress the extensive relationship between prologue and Gospel, such that one might say that the prologue is … an overture, a summary of what is subsequently developed."[21] To demonstrate this Neyrey promises to "unpack every verse of the prologue, identifying its major thematic elements and indicate some places in the Gospel where these themes reappear."

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[18] Ibid., 313 (emphasis in the original).

[19] Ibid., 314.

[20] J. Zumstein, "Le Prologue, seuil du quatrième évangile," *RSR* 83 (1995): 217–59, esp. 259. For a German version of this article see J. Zumstein's *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004), 105–26.

[21] J. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41–42 (emphasis added); "a wisdom hymn," Neyrey adds, adverting to the very first version of the theory, advanced by Adolf Harnack as long ago as 1892, "stitched by the author to the front of the Gospel to make it more acceptable to Hellenistic readers." Harnack of course did not write in those terms and most of the subsequent supporters of the basic theory have not subscribed to his view of its purpose.

This he does in nineteen paragraphs. To show the nature and the quality of his demonstration it will be sufficient (but also, I fear, necessary) to quote a substantial portion of the first three.

> 1. *Word of God and Words of God*. In the beginning was the unique Word (1:1), who alone makes God known (1:18; 6:46). Moreover, the Word of God "comes from heaven … and testifies to what he has seen and heard … He whom God has sent speaks the words of God" (3:31–34). In his final prayer, Jesus tells God how faithful he has been in revealing God's word: "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the word" (17:6, 26) …
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> 2. *The Word Was "God."* In several places, Jesus is accused of being "equal to God" (5:17–18; 10:33). The name "God" will be shown to refer to God's creative power, which Jesus, who is Logos and "God," exercises in 1:1–3. The deity's other name, "Lord," is associated with the second power (i.e. eschatological power). Hence, at the Gospel's ending, when Jesus has demonstrated power over death, he is acclaimed "My Lord and My God."
>
> 3. *In Him Was Life*. Jesus tells us that God gave him "to have life in himself" (5:26), meaning that Jesus is imperishable or immortal, just as God is. Jesus also tells us that God gave him power to lay down his life and power to take it up (10:17–18). Both of these remarks, we suggest, indicate what the author means when he says "in him was life."[22]

The arguments are feeble, the exegesis null. I will comment briefly, in turn, on just these three paragraphs.

1. It is misleading, indeed confusing, to place the pre-existent Logos right at the outset alongside "the words of God," as if these were conceptually related, and as if the words recorded in the Gospel were uttered not by Jesus but by God himself. Crucially too, as I have already noted, neither in the body of the Gospel nor anywhere else in the Bible apart from the Prologue and 1 and 2 John is there any trace of the startlingly novel idea of *incarnate wisdom*.

2. The accusation of *claiming* to be (not of *being*) equal to God is one that Jesus *defends himself against* in John 5, protesting that he can do nothing of his own accord (ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ, v. 30). True, he does say elsewhere, "I and the Father are one" (10:30) and "he who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9), but these apparent contradictions require careful elucidation. Moreover God's other name in this Gospel is not *Lord* but *Father*. The term *Lord* (Κύριος) is how Jesus' disciples address him, as he observes in 13:14. It is never used to refer to God in the Gospel except in biblical quotations (1:23; 12:13, 38).

3. God's bestowal of life upon Jesus *does not* include the gift of immortality, for he dies later on the cross. And when the Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep this is not ζωή, but ψυχή, which corresponds in Hebrew to נפש, not to חיים, in Latin to *anima*, natural human life, not to *vita*.

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[22] Ibid., 42.

In 2008, thirty years after the publication of Barrett's commentary, Martin Hengel also declared himself in favour of the view that the Prologue is related to the Gospel and "can come [*mag kommen*?] from the Evangelist himself." Unlike Barrett, however, he recognizes that what Barrett calls the "Baptist" verses, written in the same style as the hymn (!), "have been inserted to clamp it to the Gospel." He contemptuously dismisses the many attempts to reconstruct the original shorter form of the hymn. Referring to Michael Theobald's painstaking *Habilitationsschrift*,[23] which reports some forty of these – "Naivité or hybris on the part of exegetes," he asks, "or both?" But why should all or any of these scholarly undertakings be ascribed to naivity or hubris? In what follows Hengel proceeds on the basis of his own conviction that this "hymn or psalm to the Logos" is the work of the evangelist himself, "who describes in stages the saving revelation of God through his Word."[24]

II. The Logos Hymn

It is of course true that of forty mutually incompatible reconstructions only one can be correct. But Hengel's response is like that of a man chafing impatiently before a locked door who, when handed forty different keys, each supposed to fit the lock, throws them all away and stalks off in a dudgeon. Inquiry into the hymn that underlies the Prologue is by no means wasted effort, even if, as Michael Theobald admits, "der Streit um dessen genaue Gestalt vielleicht nie zur Ruhe kommen wird."[25] The crucial difficulty lies in distinguishing the original hymn from subsequent comments on it. If this could be done tolerably well we would have some indication of the evangelist's own understanding of the hymn and his reasons for using it as a preface to his Gospel. Although we have to admit that absolute certainty is unachievable, the possibilities are limited; and by moving within the limits we may dispel some of the fog.

Let me outline the two main problems:

1. Was the Prologue composed before or after the body of the Gospel? The majority of commentators think (and most simply assume) that it was composed first, as a deliberate introduction. (See note 3.) My own view is

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[23] M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988).

[24] M. Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham and C. Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 266–94, esp. 266.

[25] Theobald, *Kommentar*, 105 (n. 1).

that this is unlikely, for two reasons – first the awkwardness of the insertions concerning John the Baptist, especially the second, and secondly the absence of any reference to the words and deeds of Jesus that make up the substance of the Gospel, or to his passion and death. If the author of the Prologue had been concerned to prepare for what follows by rehearsing its main motifs, then he would have included at the very least some reference to these – the stuff of the Gospel that follows. Yet they are not even alluded to in the Prologue that we have. Accordingly, I am persuaded that the Prologue was not attached to the Gospel until a recognizable version of this had already been composed (the first edition) – signs, discourses, controversies, passion and resurrection – and that it was added for some other reason than to provide readers with a guide enabling them to understand all this material.

2. Which of the eighteen verses, and which parts of them, belong to the original hymn, and which were added later as interjections or comments? Barrett, collating earlier estimates in the course of preparing his 1970 lecture, found that altogether "a maximum of thirteen verses are ascribed to the poetic source (1–5, 9–12, 14, 16–18); the minimum figure … is five (1, 3, 4, 10, 11)."[26] If we accept the broad consensus that at least 6–8 and 15 were later additions, and that Ernst Käsemann was wrong to exclude 14 and 16, we would still be left with disputes over six of the eighteen verses. Yet although any attempt at greater precision is always going to be open to doubt, no one looking for evidence of the evangelist's intentions can rest content with so much uncertainty. As Michael Theobald says of those who refuse the challenge: "sie berauben sich damit wichtiger Einsichten."[27] So here I want to take one further step. One fact about the Greek text, not recognized by all commentators but highlighted by Theobald,[28] should be taken into account. In the conclusion of 1:10 ("the world did not know him"), the word translated *him* is masculine (αὐτόν). This means that it cannot originally have taken up the *light* of 1:9, which is neuter (φῶς). And 1:9, after the interruption of 1:6–8, follows on from 1:5, which, picking up the conclusion of 1:4, is also about the light. So it looks as if the reflections about the light in 1:5 and 9 are comments added by the evangelist. (Also, the rather puzzling use of the present tense φαίνει in 1:5 ceases to be problematic provided it is understood as a remark of the evangelist writing in his own present.) If, then, bracketing 1:5–9, we think of the *him* of 1:10 as taking up the *him* of 1:4 (also a masculine, referring to the Logos), then there is no problem with the grammar: "what came to pass in him was life, and the life was the light of men: he was in the world, and the world did

[26] Barrett, *Prologue*, 14 (n. 9).
[27] Theobald, *Kommentar*, 105 (n. 1).
[28] Ibid., 105–06; Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 467–69 (n. 23).

not know him. He came to his own home and his own people did not receive him (another masculine)."

We may accept this grammatical argument and bracket out 1:5 and 9, or we may reject it and retain 5 and at least part of 9. In either case, provided we acknowledge that Logos (masculine) can stand as a surrogate for Wisdom (feminine in Hebrew as well as Greek) we have the beginning of what looks like a hymn in praise of wisdom. The next two verses, 12 and 13, are disputed. Following Theobald once more, I think that not only 13 but also the conclusion of 12, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, is an explanatory comment added by the evangelist to emphasize, right at the beginning of his work, the overriding importance of faith. Without at least the first clause of 12, however, there is no continuation, because without an explicit acknowledgement that at least *some* people did actually welcome the coming of the Word, then there would have been no course open to him, after a fruitless visit to earth, but to follow the example of Enoch's Wisdom and return to heaven (*1 En.* 42:1–2). But then comes the crucial v. 14, and then, without a break, v. 16. This would give us, as a minimum, the following conclusion: "But to all who received him he gave power to become children of God … And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have gazed upon his glory … And from his fullness we have all received."

This leaves us with an original hymn comprising vv. 1–4, 10–11, the beginning of 12, most of 14,[29] and 16. At 17, however, with respect, I take issue with Theobald, who assigns it to the hymn. Bultmann holds that it is an exegetical gloss on 1:16, "which mentions the name Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, suppressed until now, abruptly, and without any introduction."[30] I think it is much more than a gloss on the preceding verse, but defer any comment until later.

First I want to return to the thesis that the evangelist composed his Prologue from the outset as a preface to his Gospel. At the start of my essay I stressed the lamentable weakness of the arguments of three different champions of this thesis. But of course one cannot conclude that their thesis is wrong simply because of the weakness of the arguments they use to defend it.

Jean Zumstein, in a very interesting and original essay,[31] offers a different defence. Without naming Barrett or Dunn, he highlights very clearly the flaws in their main arguments, and lends some plausibility to his own

[29] As Theobald, *Kommentar*, 106 (n. 1), points out, the phrase "glory as of the only Son from the Father" introduces an idea not to be found in the original hymn: it must have been added by the evangelist.

[30] Bultmann, *Gospel*, 17 (n. 5).

[31] See n. 20 above.

thesis simply by skirting circumspectly around the pitfalls into which they had stumbled.

In stressing the links (*liens*, *Verbindungen*) between the Prologue and the Gospel, he makes four points. I have no problem with the first three of these. (The second, based on the "Baptist" verses, is undisputed.) The fourth, however, listing what he calls "toute une série de catégories théologiques fondamentales," is somewhat less convincing, because although Zumstein provisionally accepts the thesis of an underlying Logos hymn ("à supposer que cette thèse soit fondée"), he makes no attempt to distinguish between the terms in the Prologue that are shared by the Gospel and the Logos hymn and those that are not.[32] This is important, because if – the very point at issue – the bulk of the Gospel was composed before the Prologue was added, then it is obviously a mistake to suppose that concepts (and words) found *both* in the original hymn *and* in the Gospel were introduced into the Prologue with the express purpose of fashioning links. They were there already. Moreover the terms involved here are among the most significant of all: life, light, knowledge, truth, glory, and possibly the light/darkness antithesis too.[33] As Zumstein says himself, it is from what the evangelist has added to the hymn ("les ajouts rédactionnels") that we can learn how he reread it.

On the question whether the Prologue was composed before or after the narrative that follows, Zumstein sidesteps all earlier discussion. Ignoring the earlier arguments of Brown, Lindars, and Becker that we have to reckon with a number of different stages in the composition of the Gospel, he focuses exclusively on the extended reflection in Michael Theobald's *Fleischwerdung*.[34] Yet he gives surprisingly short shrift even to this. After briefly outlining the summary Theobald offers (on little more than a page) of his own position, he swerves aside. "L'histoire de la composition du quatrième évangile," he declares, "reste un énigme," and in response to the question whether one has to have recourse to a diachronic model to explain all the continuities and discontinuities that characterize the relationship between the Prologue and the body of the Gospel, he replies, simply, "Nous le pensons pas,"[35] evidently reluctant to deal with the many reasons that multiple-stage theorists had advanced in defense of this theory.

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[32] Yet Zumstein is clearly aware of the distinction, and lists the probable additions: vv. 6–8 and 15, 12c–13, and 17–18 (Zumstein, "Prologue," 225 [n. 20]). Later it becomes clear that he fully accepts the old thesis: "pour commencer son œuvre, l'évangéliste a recouru à un hymne traditionnel en usage dans les communautés johanniques" (228).

[33] Depending upon whether one sees v. 5 and (part of) v. 9 as belonging to the original hymn or as having been added by the evangelist.

[34] Though drawing attention in a note to Theobald's whole argument (pp. 296–399, 438–93), he focuses on the two-page summary (pp. 371–73).

[35] Zumstein, "Prologue," 225 (20).

Both Theobald and Zumstein are interested in what the former, following H. Lausberg, calls the *Metareflexivität* of the Prologue. "Contre Theobald," says Zumstein, "on fera valoir que le caractère métatexte du prologue n'implique en aucune façon son caractère secondaire."[36] But Theobald would probably agree: still following Lausberg[37] he had said this: "Über die Feststellung der rein formalen 'Metareflexivität' des Prologs hinaus müssen noch andere Argumente mit ins Spiel kommen, will man für Verfasser-Verschiedenheit plädieren."[38] One of these additional arguments is the fact that apart from a few redactional passages "gibt es keinen Text im Ev, der unbedingt zu seinem Verständnis den Prolog voraussetzt." This is surely right. But when Theobald adds that it is rather the case that "der Prolog auf den narrativen Vorgaben des Corpus Evangelii aufruht und aus ihrer Terminologie gebildet ist,"[39] I have to disagree, if only because so many of the key words occur in the Logos hymn, and the origins of this hymn are certainly not to be sought in the body of the Gospel.

These are difficult issues. The most effective way of throwing light on them, I suggest, is to start with the time-honoured theory that the evangelist made use of the Logos hymn when composing the Prologue, and then to weigh up the plausibility of suggestions based upon this supposition. This is what I propose to do in the concluding part of this paper. But first …

III. An Historical Parenthesis

Someone once commented upon the remarkable number of skeletons that litter the graveyard of research into the Fourth Gospel. Quite a few of these turn out on inspection to be theses concerning its composition. The partitionist theories of Weisse, Schweizer and Wendt (names that most Johannine scholars nowadays would not even recognize)[40] have been lying there,

[36] Ibid., 225, n. 25. What does he mean by *caractère secondaire*? If he is saying that it does not follow from the reflective character of the Prologue that it was written *after* the text it introduces, then of course he is right. (Though I strongly suspect that the vast majority of prologues and prefaces, overtures and introductions, were composed after, mostly very soon after, the work that they precede.) The important question is not *when* the Prologue was written, before or after the body of the Gospel, but the nature and substance of the reflections that can be discerned in it and how far they bear upon the Gospel itself.

[37] H. Lausberg, *Der Johannes-Prolog: Rhetorische Befunde zu Form und Sinn des Textes* (NAWG 1984/5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

[38] Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 298 (n. 23).

[39] Ibid., 373.

[40] I discuss these briefly in my *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 28–29.

long forgotten, for the best part of two centuries. The displacement theories that succeeded them (Kümmel dates the first of these to 1871)[41] later received strong endorsement from no less a scholar than Rudolf Bultmann, and lingered on in one form or another for over a century, only receiving their final coup de grâce (a merciful release, as it appeared to many) with Ernst Haenchen's unfinished commentary of 1980,[42] when they were laid to rest alongside other recently deceased oddities like Gillis Wetter's "divine man" theory and Bultmann's much vaunted Mandaean source.

Meanwhile, however, a rather different explanation had been suggested of what, following the exhaustive studies of Eduard Schwartz early in the twentieth century, had come to be called the Gospel's aporias. What is sometimes known as the multiple-stage theory is built upon the hypothesis that the Gospel as we know it was not originally planned as a unified composition; the awkward bumps in the present text result from the failure of one or more editors or redactors to ensure a smooth transition at points where new material has been added. Wilhelm Wilkens, the first scholar, as far as I know, to come up with a coherent version of this theory, thought of the evangelist as an eyewitness who twice revised his original work.[43] The most recent of numerous different proposals built upon the same basic premise employ the term *relecture* to indicate that in some cases the additional material is to be seen as a revision of an earlier text in the light of new situations which, according to this new modification of the theory, have arisen in the life of the community.[44]

In certain quarters the multiple-stage theory won wide acceptance, but eventually it came up abruptly against the formidable obstacle of narrative criticism. Like C. H. Dodd, who may be seen as a precursor of this new method of gospel study,[45] the narrative critics simply ignore the problems

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[41] W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1975), 198.

[42] In a section of his introduction headed "Disorder and Rearrangement" Haenchen concludes, "The time of theories of displacement is gone" in E. Haenchen, *John*, Vol. 1 (trans. R. W. Funk; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 51.

[43] W. Wilkens, *Die Entstehungsgeschichte des vierten Evangeliums* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1958).

[44] J. Zumstein himself is the leading proponent of *relecture*, and his *Kreative Erinnerung* (see n. 20) is full of fruitful suggestions arising from the insight that many passages in the Gospel, especially chs. 15–17, were composed later than others. So I find it puzzling and paradoxical that *at the same time* (for his essay on the Prologue is included in *Kreative Erinnerung*) he completely rejects (p. 113) what he calls *ein diachrones Modell.* (Other scholars who have worked along the same lines include Zumstein's assistant, A. Dettwiler, and C. Hoegen-Rohls.)

[45] See R. A. Culpepper, "C. H. Dodd as a Precursor to Narrative Criticism," in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John* (ed. T. Thatcher and C. H. Williams; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 31–65.

wrestled with by their predecessors. They see no point in offering new solutions to these, because once it is admitted that the exegete's real responsibility is to deal with the text as has been transmitted, then even the most intractable of the aporias are of no consequence. Narrative critics need not bother to choose from among the wide variety of multiple-stage theories that have been put forward, because the delicate task of discerning between different levels of redaction has no relevance to their own work. Clearly what holds for the body of the Gospel holds for the Prologue too. Narrative critics have no need of or use for the kind of defense of its integrity we have seen offered by Barrett and Dunn.

It is worth observing, in concluding this parenthesis, that the multiple-stage theory, unlike the earlier partitionist and displacement theories, has never been disproved. As Michael Theobald notes (opening his brief discussion of the issue under the heading, *Die sekundäre Redaktion des Buches*), the supposition that the Gospel results from a single casting (*aus einem Guß*), and that chs. 1–21 are the work of a single author was enjoying a certain popularity at the time he was writing his own book (i.e. the years preceding its publication in 2009). But this supposition, as he points out, mildly, overlooks the literary facts (*geht an den literarischen Befunden vorbei*.)[46]

Having myself argued previously, following Raymond Brown, Barnabas Lindars and, to a lesser extent, J. Louis Martyn, that there were at least two distinct stages (generally called *editions*) in the composition of the Gospel,[47] I was gratified to discover that Theobald, whose commentary, I am embarrassed to confess, I only discovered some years after it had been published, is in basic agreement with this thesis. Indeed, he amplifies and refines it in impressive detail.[48] I now think that the Prologue was added to the Gospel just before (or at the same time as) the new material of the second edition, notably chs. 6 and 17.[49]

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[46] Theobald, *Kommentar*, 70 (n. 1).

[47] J. L. Martyn, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 76–90, 160–66.

[48] Theobald, *Kommentar*, 70–74 (n. 1). Only on two points (important ones) do I find myself in disagreement. Theobald insists that the Gospel is a *Gemeindebuch*; but I see no reason to suppose, except in the case of ch. 21, that anyone other than the evangelist himself had a hand in the major secondary redactions. (1 John is a different matter.) And I have argued, following Lindars, that the whole of ch. 6 (not just vv. 51c–58 and 64–65) belonged to the second edition.

[49] It is in these two chapters that we find the most direct references to the Prologue. 6:46 ("Not that anyone has seen the Father *except him who is from God*") reflects and corrects 1:18 ("No one has ever seen God"); 17:5 ("the glory I had with thee before the existence of the world") and 17:24 ("in your love for me before the foundation of the world") echo the key motif of pre-existence.

IV. A Real Prologue

1. The Logos Hymn

If we accept the traditional view that the evangelist has taken a Logos hymn, probably written by one of his own community, and adapted it to make a new beginning for his Gospel, then we may wonder why. What was his motive for doing so? And what is the significance of the reflections he appends at the end?[50]

Almost without exception commentators refer to this as a creation hymn. But this is wrong – most obviously wrong, perhaps, in the Latin translation of 1:3, *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, echoed later in the key verse, *Et verbum caro factum est*. The Latin translator, blinded by the allusion to Genesis in the very first verse, has mistranslated the Greek verb γίνεσθαι, which does not mean *to be made*, but *to come to pass*. Compare this with the Syriac, where the translator, more alert and not misled by the initial allusion to Genesis, translates literally: "Everything came to pass in him, and apart from him not even one thing came to pass."[51] Latin, moreover, having no definite article, cannot discriminate between two very different Greek terms: τὰ πάντα, the regular term for the whole universe,[52] and πάντα, which means *everything*, but much more vaguely. One Greek writer, the Gnostic Ptolemy, keenly aware of the difference, and anxious nevertheless to find support for his own conviction that this prestigious and authoritative author was as concerned as he was himself with the genesis of the universe (τῶν ὁλῶν), writes this: "he (the apostle John) λέγει εἶναι τά τε πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ γεγογέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγογέναι οὐδέν" (cited by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 33.3.6). Ptolemy recognized that the article was required before πάντα in John 1:3 to give him the sense he required, and evidently had no compunction in adding it, realizing that otherwise the Prologue would provide no backing for his own views.

One important early Jewish writer found support in the opening of Genesis for the belief that, as Carol Newsom puts it, "what endows the world with meaning is … that set of structured relationships called מחשבת

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[50] I first advanced the argument summarized in what follows nearly thirty years ago, and have recently repeated it, slightly modified, in a recently published book: J. Ashton, *The Gospel of John and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 145–55.

[51] *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* (ed. F. C. Burkitt; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 1:423. An exact parallel is to be found in *4 Ezra* 6:6: "then I planned these things and they came into being through me and not another," for where the Syriac (in Michael Stone's translation) has "came into being," the Latin, just as in John 1:3, has *facta sunt*.

[52] For examples of this usage in the Old Testament, see Gen 1:11; 9:3; Job 8:3; 11:10; Wis 1:7, 14. For the New Testament see Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16–17; Heb 2:10.

כבודו, *His [i.e. God's] glorious plan*."[53] For, as she explains, where Gen 1 is concerned with creation, in 1QS 3–4 the author of the Community Rule "is concerned with the מחשבת [i.e. the plan, literally *thought*, of God] that grounds creation."[54] "From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be, כול הווה ונהייה" (1QS 3:15), a text in which the Hebrew nip'al of היה corresponds exactly to the Syriac p'al of *hwh* as this occurs in the Curetonian version of John 1:3 and 14, translating, in both instances, the Greek ἐγένετο. *This is precisely the concern of the author of the Logos hymn – not creation, but the plan of God.* What caught the attention of the evangelist in this hymn and seized his imagination had little to do with creation. Rather it was the coincidence of the meaning of the word Logos (the divine plan) with the story he had just told; for he could now see that God's plan for humankind was nothing more and nothing less than the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and all his words and deeds, as he had recounted them in his Gospel.[55]

But what of the author of the hymn itself? If we have to confess ignorance of his (or her) identity, the same is true of the evangelist – who was surely no less dazzled than his own readers have been by the brief flash of religious and poetic genius, no more than a few lines, that he was to absorb and assimilate into his Gospel. The amazing conviction that God's wisdom had taken flesh was first of all not his own insight but another's. It was not he but another who declared, "We have seen his glory." The theme of glory permeates the Gospel: seen by his disciples as early as the marriage feast of Cana, Jesus' glory never left him. The constant awareness of Jesus' glory, evident throughout the Gospel, cannot be explained simply as a literary expansion of a motif taken over from the hymn. Here, surely, was an experience that the two writers shared, and that brought them together. But they experienced it differently. What astounded the author of the hymn was his vision of wisdom in the flesh, whereas what preoccupied the evangelist was such an overwhelming sense of the divine glory of the man whose story he was telling that it led him to play down the purely human traits found in abundance in the other three gospels.

2. Moses and the Law

Let us leave aside both the light/darkness antithesis in v. 5 (which may have been added by the evangelist precisely in order to prepare his readers for the dramatic opposition that colours the whole of the first half of his

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[53] C. A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 84 (emphasis added).

[54] Ibid., 86.

[55] See n. 50, above. The passage to which that note refers is an excursus entitled, "The Prologue: God's Plan for Humankind."

book);[56] and also the gloss in v. 12 on "those who received him, to whom he gave power to become children of God," by "who believed in his name." Both of these deserve fuller comment, but the two concluding verses of the Prologue are more important still, for it is here that the evangelist gives the strongest indication to his readers of the significance they should attach to the hymn he has taken over.

Verse 17 reads, ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωυσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. Two of the key words here, χάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια, are taken from the hymn, in which ἀλήθεια occurs once, in v. 14, and χάρις three times, once in v. 14 and twice (χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος) in v. 16. The use the evangelist makes of these two motifs, however, could scarcely be more different. He seizes upon the first, χάρις, grace, because it enables him to make the strongest possible contrast with the Mosaic law. Michael Theobald, agreeing here with Raymond Brown,[57] thinks that there is no antithesis intended in this verse, noting the absence of a *but* between the two clauses,[58] and arguing from the use of the verb διδόναι that the law is seen as a gift.[59] I disagree. By the time the Prologue was written the Johannine community had severed relations with the Jewish synagogue where they used to worship alongside their fellow-Jews, though understandably they attached all the blame for this breach to their antagonists (9:22). And they had evidently accepted the designation *disciples of Jesus* as opposed to *disciples of Moses* (9:28). The only value ascribed to the law in this Gospel is as a testimony to Jesus (5:39). It may well be, as Barnabas Lindars argues,[60] that in joining the terms χάρις and ἀλήθεια the evangelist was consciously alluding to the traditional Jewish view of the law as a gift and a grace; but if so it was to assert that, contrary to this tradition, the *only* grace, the *only* truth has come through Christ. Not only is the law being completely rejected in this verse, but Moses, according to Jewish tradition the prime intermediary between God and his people, has been ousted by Jesus Christ.

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[56] Bultmann, *Gospel*, 48 (n. 5), thinks that v. 5 summarizes the first part of the Gospel, chs. 3–12, and that the other side of the theme, summarized in vv. 12–13, is presented and developed in chs. 13–17.

[57] R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1: *I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 16.

[58] The steward at the wedding at Cana, noticing how differently the bridegroom is acting from everybody else when it comes to serving the good wine, remarks on it without a *but* (2:10).

[59] Theobald, *Kommentar*, 134 (n. 1).

[60] B. Lindars observes that according to rabbinic exegesis the grace and the truth of God are revealed in the law and refers to a midrash on Ps 25:10 that includes the phrase חסד ואמת (*ḥesed we'meth*): B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 97.

Truth, however, like glory, is a favourite idea of the evangelist himself. And the use he makes of it, in different contexts and different forms, is so individual, so imaginative, so extensive, that it is hard to believe that he borrowed it from someone else.[61] If he did, he certainly made it his own. And it may well be that in this instance the author of the hymn, whom we must think of, after all, as a member of the same community, had himself taken it over from the evangelist. No doubt these two were good friends. Perhaps they had reflected over the truth that was Jesus whilst praying together, or over a glass of wine. Who knows?

3. Revelation

In 1:18 we read, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. This verse is significant in several ways.

First, within the Prologue itself, we are told that the Logos, now identified with Jesus, after sojourning for an unspecified time among those who welcomed him, is now resting with God. (The Greek phrase εἰς τὸν κόλπον has a surprising physicality, weakly rendered by the English "in the bosom of the Father," a rendering that does nothing to convey the image demanded by the Greek of a father hugging a greatly loved son close to his chest.)

Second, the assertion that no one has seen God is effectively directed against Jewish claims on behalf of Moses.

Third, the readers of the Prologue and of the Gospel that follows are told how they are to understand the claim in the hymn, now endorsed by the evangelist on behalf of his own community, that he and they have gazed on the incarnate Logos. This did not involve a direct vision of God – nobody has ever had that – but that is of no consequence, for God can be and has been fully revealed in the person of Jesus. This message will be most perfectly expressed in the words, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father," and "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (14:8, 10). The standard English translation of the very last word of the Prologue, ἐξηγήσατο, "he has made him known," obscures its real meaning; for in the Gospel that follows Jesus conspicuously refrains from saying anything at all about God except in references to the relationship between them: sender/sent, Father/Son. Properly understood, however, this final word is an admirable summary of the message of the whole Gospel: the Jesus of the story that follows – all that he says and does, his life, death and resurrection – is God made manifest, God fully revealed.

[61] According to Brown, *John*, 1:19 (n. 57), what ἀλήθεια means in the Prologue is not truth but "endurance, fidelity."

The Significance of the Prologue for Understanding John's Soteriology

William R. G. Loader

The issue of soteriology in the Fourth Gospel remains vexed. There are those who emphasise the atoning nature of Christ's death as a core element of Johannine soteriology[1] and those who see it as at best marginal, if present at all, and locate soteriology in relation to response to the offer of life by the earthly Jesus during his ministry and the risen Jesus after his death.[2]

Some might argue that we should give the prologue little weight when considering John's soteriology and that it should not be treated as a summary of John's Gospel, let alone as indicating his soteriology.[3] It scarcely mentions Jesus' death and then primarily as rejection. One might argue that it is also atypical of the rest of the Gospel, where its distinctive motif of the Logos and of the Logos becoming flesh does not recur,[4] and the

[1] So U. Schnelle, "Markinische und johanneische Kreuzestheologie," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. G. Van Belle; BETL 200; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 233–58; J. Frey, "Edler Tod – wirksamer Tod – stellvertretender Tod – heilschaffender Tod: Zur narrativen und theologischen Deutung des Todes Jesu im Johannesevangelium," in ibid., 65–94; M. Labahn, "Bedeutung und Frucht des Todes Jesu im Spiegel des johanneischen Erzählaufbaus," in ibid., 431–56.

[2] J. G. van der Watt, "Salvation in the Gospel according to John," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J. G. van der Watt; NovTSup 121; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101–31, writes: "We might, therefore, conclude that although John does not emphasize or focus on substitution or sacrifice, there are some insinuations in that direction. However, these references do not come into focus at all. They are secondary to the revelatory function of the cross events" (116).

[3] Already A. Harnack, "Über das Verhältniß des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZTK* 2 (1892): 189–231, argued, for instance, that the prologue was not the key to the Gospel but was written to prepare the Hellenistic reader (230). See the extensive discussion of earlier research in M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), 3–161.

[4] On this see Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 295, 491–92 (n. 3) who argued that the prologue was added by a redactor at a stage where christological dualism based on a particular interpretation of Jesus' baptism was beginning to emerge, such as he detects behind the conflict in 1 John. The only other place where I would find clear evidence of concern

language of "grace and truth," at least "grace" and much more is not found.[5] Indeed, the argument has been made that seeing the prologue as a late addition helps explain such unevenness.[6] At best then the prologue could be seen as the first commentary on the Gospel[7] and so as reflecting how it could be heard, not in itself insignificant. I am more persuaded by the view that the prologue functions rhetorically as an introduction to what follows, most recently again argued by Jean Zumstein,[8] and that for that purpose the

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with Jesus' humanity (and as antidocetic) in the Gospel is in 19:35. Theobald would have seen here, as in the prologue with its emphasis on creation and on incarnation (1:14) and in 21:24–25, traces of the work of a final redactor (372). He contrasted the christology of the prologue and that of the Gospel: "Nicht die Vorstellung vom Logos bildet den Rahmen der Christologie des Evs, sondern die vom *Menschensohn*, der vom Himmel herabgekommen ist und wieder dorthin aufsteigt, um verherrlicht zu werden, der gleichzeitig der *Sohn* katexochen ist" (491). This does not sufficiently take into account the significant commonality between the two in the use of wisdom/Torah imagery and gives undue weight to the Son of Man title, which has a specialized focus in John. He has since revised his assessment and now sees the prologue not as secondary addition by a redactor but as integral to the evangelist's composition, who draws on the hymnic tradition of his communities to supplement the beginning with John the Baptist which he found in his signs source. M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 101–08. He writes: "So *verzahnte* [original] er ihn mit dem Christushymnus seiner Gemeinden und baute beides zum vorliegenden Prolog aus" (108).

[5] See the discussion in J. Zumstein, "Der Prolog, Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium," in *Der Johannesprolog* (ed. G. Kruck; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 49–75, 51–52. He also notes the significant links between the prologue and the Gospel: the inclusion between the reference to Jesus as θεός in 1:1, 18 and 20:28; also the motifs of life, light, coming into the world, glory, truth, faith, knowledge, being born, pre-existence, seeing God, and light-darkness dualism (52–55).

[6] So Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 372 (n. 3). Cf. P. Hofrichter, *Im Anfang war der "Johannesprolog": Das urchristliche Logosbekenntnis – die Basis neutestamentlicher und gnostischer Theologie* (Biblische Untersuchungen 17; Regensburg: Pustet, 1986), who argues that the Gospel is a commentary on the prologue (13–82). For a critical discussion of both options see Zumstein, "Prolog," 57–58, 61 (n. 5). See also the review in J. Beutler, "Der Johannes-Prolog – Ouvertüre des Johannesevangeliums," in *Der Johannesprolog*, 77–106, 78–82 (n. 5).

[7] So R. F. Collins, "The Oldest Commentary on the Fourth Gospel," *TBT* 98 (1978): 1769–75, 1771.

[8] Zumstein, "Prolog," 59–60 (n. 5) points to the function of a prologue in contemporary Greek and Latin literature and summarises: "Ob innerhalb der Rhetorik oder des Dramas, das Vorwort muss die Hörerschaft über den Zweck des Werks unterrichten und ihr die Mittel liefern, dessen Gegenstand und Verlauf zu verstehen" (60). Applied to John he notes: "Der Prolog fasst nicht den Plot der Erzählung zusammen, sondern er sagt, wie die Erzählung, die sich anschließend entfalten wird, zu lesen ist" (62). Such an introduction also makes the irony work (63). "Der Prolog ist also ein grundsätzlich *offener Text*, der die Rolle hat, seine Leserschaft an die Erzählung heranzuführen" (69); and again: "Die theologische Funktion des Prologs besteht darin, *den hermeneutischen Rahmen* festzulegen, innerhalb dessen die joh Erzählung gelesen werden muss" (75). He notes the

author has employed the Jewish wisdom/logos tradition already developed christologically and known to his hearers.[9]

That tradition has its own story to tell as it was differently developed. We know of at least two directions in which the wisdom myth was taken in Judaism, one in which Ben Sira, like Baruch, identifies wisdom with God's Torah, which took up its dwelling in Israel (Sir 24; Bar 3) and one in which as divine wisdom it found no place (Parables of Enoch, *1 En.* 42). What was once the story of wisdom, sometimes identified with Torah, in that sense, God's word, has become in the prologue the story of Jesus, God's Son. But that, too, raises such questions as to the nature of this identification.

Christological adaptation could identify Jesus in at least three different ways: (i) as the Word, not only in creation, but as coming first in the prophets and Torah to make children of God and then as climax in the flesh as Jesus;[10] (ii) as identified with wisdom Torah, having come to his creation and then in Jesus to his own people who rejected him, except for those who believed who became God's children, with the reference to coming in the flesh not as a climax but as further explanation about the nature of his coming; or (iii) as identified with wisdom, God's word, but not with Torah, and as having come to his creation and in Jesus to his own people who rejected him, except for those who believed and became God's

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"Sinnüberfluss" of the prologue by its use of mythical elements and intertextuality that give what follows a wider framework (72, 75). See also E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNTSup 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 189: "The prologue, then, sets forth cryptically in advance the religious and philosophical truths which were to be unravelled and explicated in the body of the work"; "The prologue's carefully constructed cryptic unity prepared for the reordering of events, the re-presentation of beliefs and the necessary background and personages for the re-development of the theological doctrines which followed" (195). J.-A. A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 17, writes: "In design and function, the prologue of the Fourth Gospel bears significant resemblance to those of Euripides. The prologue initiates the audience into the privileged realm of knowing that makes irony possible, orients the audience to the broader narrative in which the action is situated and prepares it to enter the action in medias res, and calls the audience into being and gives it a role."

[9] So rightly Zumstein, "Prolog," 62 (n. 5). He notes the appeal to commonality in the use of "we" (63). One might note that Paul seeks to achieve common ground with the Romans by similarly citing a known tradition in Rom 1:3–5.

[10] The position represented in the Greek Fathers and much of church tradition and in recent times again, for instance, by M. Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham and C. Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 265–94, 272–82; D. Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *HTR* 94 (2001), 243–84, 275–79. He sees in 1:1–5 a Jewish hymn and 1:6–18 Christian expansion (262–72).

children, with the reference to coming in the flesh not as a climax but as further explanation about the nature of his coming and set in contrast to God's gift of the Law.

Possibly these alternatives reflect various ways in which the wisdom myth was in fact appropriated christologically, possibly even traceable to various stages in the development of the tradition behind the prologue. The reference to John the Baptist immediately after reference to the Word in creation (1:6–8), its striking claim that only those responding to the Word could become God's children (1:12–13), and its sensitive contrast between what Moses and God's former gift of the Law offered and what the Word offered (1:16–18), convince me that the third of these alternatives best represents John's understanding of the prologue and, as I have argued elsewhere, best coheres with what we find in the rest of the Gospel.[11]

But before looking beyond the prologue, if we consider all three alternatives, they have in common an understanding of soteriology according to which one receives life and enters a relationship with God through responding positively to God's word, God's wisdom.[12] It is good Judaism: God's goodness offers a relationship which one accepts by taking on the gift of God's word in Torah. The christological version is the same, either by identifying Jesus with Torah, or by portraying Jesus as God's new initiative, to offer the life and truth to which Torah pointed. In both Judaism and in the christological version the offer and the response are essentially the same or of the same kind: believing, accepting the offer, entering the relationship, living out the consequences, and enjoying the privileges of being God's children.[13] It is essentially a Jewish soteriology, which in

[11] W. Loader, "The Law and Ethics in John's Gospel," in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings* (ed. J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik/Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 143–58; see also Beutler, "Johannes-Prolog," 84–89 (n. 6); Theobald, *Evangelium nach Johannes: 1–12*, 134–35 (n. 4).

[12] R. H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian: A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelicalism, especially Its Elites, in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 3, argues that "a Christology of the Word dominates the whole of John's Gospel." Similarly van der Watt, "Salvation," (n. 2) locates John in the context of conflict over the issue: "with whom is God and where can he be found (seen/heard)?" (102). The offer of life is the central focus of the Gospel's soteriology and its purpose (20:31). He argues that according to John the sin of the disciples of Moses "is clear: it is not expressed in terms of individual deeds or guilt, but in terms of not accepting (believing in) God as he is revealed in and through Jesus (1:9–11; 5:44–46; 8:24; 10:36–39; 15:23–24)" (107). "If the question were asked, 'From what must a person be saved according to John?,' the answer would be, 'From a lack of spiritual knowledge and blindness in order to be able to see and know the Father and the Son'" (107).

[13] Van der Watt, "Salvation," 122 (n. 2) notes: "Faith is a self-sacrificing, intellectual, and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it com-

some sense breaks the category, soteriology, or at least its narrowness as it is frequently employed, because it is not about being saved or rescued as a single act, but about entering an ongoing relationship where one enjoys the life of God. Not insignificantly it employs the temple metaphor to depict God's presence in Jesus.[14]

Is this typical or atypical of the rest of the Gospel? How does one go about answering such a question? One could simply cite some instances where it is not so or where the emphasis lies elsewhere. Surely the prime example is in 1:29 where John the Baptist acclaims the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.[15] Reinforced by the link with paschal lamb imagery which is arguably intended in the passion narrative (19:28, 36), the argument seems strong that the author is here saying something different about soteriology: salvation is because Christ died for our sins. I think it can hardly be denied that the author will have known the widespread traditions which interpreted Christ's death this way, although most of the instances where people find evidence of it in the text are surprisingly ambiguous. The shepherd lays down his life, explains the text, in order that he might take it up again (10:17).[16] Laying down one's life for one's friends (15:13) does not appear to have atonement in view.[17] Having one person die for the people (11:50) is suggestive but also not clearly focused

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pletely transforms a person's thoughts and deeds in accordance with this message and leads to an obedient life of doing what a child of God should do."

[14] So U. Busse, *Das Johannesevangelium: Bildlichkeit, Diskurs und Ritual* (BETL 162; Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 332–34; M. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 62, who writes: "The Gospel presents God's dwelling in the midst of humanity not by way of Israel's Torah, but in the humanity of Jesus."

[15] So Schnelle, "Kreuzestheologie," 244–45 (n. 1) who notes its prominence and *inclusio* with 19:35–37, but then proceeds to homogenise disparate sayings relating to Jesus' death, such as "the hour," as though all are pointing to vicarious atonement. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 432–33 (n. 3) rightly protests against a statistical approach which fails to recognise the indications from "Aufbau" and "Struktur" which emphasise the central importance of Jesus' death in John, but then does not sufficiently differentiate the strands of John's interpretation.

[16] T. Söding, "Einsatz des Lebens: Ein Motiv johanneischer Soteriologie," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (n. 1), 363–84, writes: "Jesus setzt sein menschliches Leben (ψυχή) ein. Damit die Schafe leben können, stirbt der Hirt. Sühnetheologie liegt fern, exkludierende Stellvertretung nahe; ὑπέρ heißt nicht 'wegen', sondern 'zugunsten von' unter Einschluss von 'anstelle'. Durch Stellvertretung im Sterben werden die Schafe vor dem Tode bewahrt" (380). Even so like most other scholars, he does not take John's own explanation in 10:17 of the purpose of the act sufficiently into account.

[17] Ibid.: "Nach Joh 15 hat Jesu Tod Heilsbedeutung; aber sie ist nicht unter dem Aspekt der Sündenvergebung entfaltet, sondern der bleibenden Christusgemeinschaft, die zur Gemeinschaft mit Gott führt und die Kirche als Freundesgemeinschaft mit Jesus begründet" (382).

on sin. Jesus' sanctifying himself in 17:19 stands beside his statements that his disciples are sanctified in or by the truth (17:17; cf. 15:3; 13:10).[18] Even the lamb, where a link with the imagery of the Passover lamb may be present, comes in a context dominated by royal messianic expectation and its language ("Christ," "Son of God," "King of Israel," and probably "Lamb of God"), suggesting that the sin being removed could be something more like the evil of the world than individuals' sins. One may debate the extent to which some or any of these allusions imply that Christ's death for sins forms part of his christology.[19] I am inclined to believe that the author does know and embrace this tradition, much as I think that this is so among the authors of the Synoptic Gospels where it is present, though also scarcely central (Mark 10:45; 14:24). On the other hand, reduction of Jesus' death to merely a point of exit,[20] as some have proposed, ignores the prominence given it especially by the repeated reference to it in association with the designation Son of Man as the hour, the moment of his exaltation and glorification, the turning point which releases the Spirit and inaugurates greater things including the disciples' universal mission. But this rich cluster of ideas should not be homogenised into an atonement theory any more than should "It is finished" (19:30), in which Jesus repeats language used previously to describe his mandate to finish the work of making his Father known and offering life (17:3–4; 4:34).

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[18] Cf. Frey, "Edler Tod," 92 (n. 1).

[19] Söding, "Einsatz des Lebens," (n. 16) notes that the focus in John is not sacrifice of Jesus' life (*Lebenshingabe*) but his setting his life on the line (*Lebenseinsatz*): "Das relativiert nicht die Bedeutung des Todes Jesu, aber verbindet ihn mit seinem Leben, und zwar nicht unter dem Aspekt des Geschicks, das Jesus ereilt, sondern der göttlichen Vollmacht, die Jesus im Leben wie im Sterben wahrnimmt" (372). D. Rensberger, "The Messiah Who Has Come into the World: The Message of the Gospel of John," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (ed. R. Fortna and T. Thatcher; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 15–24, writes: "The Fourth Evangelist does not develop a theory of atonement, or of any other specific relation between Jesus' death and the forgiveness of sins … Jesus' death is for the benefit of those who believe in him, but FE [the Fourth Evangelist] leaves the details of this benefit vague, perhaps intentionally so" (19). And see R. Bieringer, "Das Lamm Gottes, das die Sünde der Welt hinwegnimmt (Joh 1,29): Eine kontextorienterte und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung auf dem Hintergrund der Passatradition als Deutung des Todes Jesu im Johannesevangelium," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, 199–232 (n. 1), who concludes: "Der Ausdruck ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ bezieht sich nicht unmittelbar auf den Tod Jesu. Die Befähigung zum αἴρειν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου kommt dem Lamm Gottes in erster Linie als Geistträger und nicht als Gekreuzigter zu" (231).

[20] Rightly challenged, for instance, by Frey, "Edler Tod," 67 (n. 1). Outlining the motifs he finds for interpreting Jesus' death, noble death (71–76), effective death (76–82), vicarious death (82–90), expiatory death (90–93), he concludes that the numerically strongest is noble death (93).

How then does the essentially Jewish soteriology of the prologue relate to the Gospel? My own research on this established with wide acceptance that the central structure of Johannine Christology portrays the Son coming from the Father who sent him to offer light and life and truth, faced rejection, returned to the Father, exalted and glorified in ascension, then sending the Spirit and the disciples with the Spirit to continue to offer the life and present Jesus as the life-giver.[21] Methodologically it was sound to look for repeated patterns and summaries, rather than isolated statements. The evidence clearly showed that time after time Jesus offered a relationship with himself and so with God, which could be portrayed as an offer of eternal life, variously described as life, light, truth, bread, water. While the author employs the envoy motif, which might raise the expectation that the son as revealer came to reveal something, consistent with the model as a communication bearer, the author's christology is not focused primarily on cognitive awareness or information giving, but on communicating an offer of life in relationship to God.[22] An element to which I could have given greater attention was the fact that the images used to portray this offer almost certainly derive from the use of such imagery to describe wisdom/Torah in Judaism, a point well made by Cornelis Bennema in his critical reassessment of my work.[23] For while the term Logos does not recur in the rest of the Gospel, the imagery belonging to the tradition which identified Logos/Wisdom/Torah certainly does. Time after time we find Jesus in conversation, offering this life and confronting those who reject it.

There is also a polemical edge because he declares that only he offers life. With the "I am" statements and the use of "true," John's Jesus makes

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[21] W. Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Structure and Issues* (2d ed.; BBET 23; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992). See also W. Loader, *Jesus in John's Gospel: Structure and Issues in Johannine Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

[22] See also Zumstein, "Prolog," 69 (n. 5). C. Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2/148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), in his extensive treatment of my book, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, misses this aspect when he writes: "The major players in scholarly discussion of Johannine soteriology – Bultmann, Forestell, Loader – all emphasize the importance of knowledge and understanding, i.e., they attribute a cognitive aspect to salvation" (118); similarly: "for both Bultmann and Loader the cognitive aspect of salvation seems rather vacuous, being defined primarily as recognition/identification (of Jesus as the Revealer sent by God)" (33).

[23] Bennema, *Saving Wisdom* (n. 22). On the use of wisdom motifs in John see also M. M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 130–36; and C. D. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:352, who notes: "Observers have long noted that virtually everything that John says about the Logos – apart from its incarnation as a particular historical person – Jewish literature said about divine Wisdom."

exclusive claims, which include clearly, but sensitively setting what he offers in contrast to, what Moses offers, such as in 5:39 ("You search the scriptures, because you think that you have eternal life in them; and they are testifying about me") and 6:32 ("It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father who gives the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives eternal life to the world … I am the bread of life"). Thus while "grace and truth" does not recur, probably because it derives from typological use of Exodus (Exod 34:6 LXX),[24] "truth" certainly does. In terms of soteriology what John offers is not something different in kind from what his dissenting fellow Jews offered in Torah, namely a relationship for life. But it is different in that it claims now to offer in fullness at a higher level of the Spirit what Moses and Torah offered as the gift of God at the level of the flesh.[25] John never disparages that gift, but sees it as pointing forward to the fulfilment which renders it redundant except as witness to what has now come.[26]

The prologue does not tell the whole story, but its soteriology is thoroughly consistent with what one finds in the Gospel. The Son offers life. That is the Gospel's ultimate goal: "that you might have life" (20:30–31). One can counter this with the argument that John is engaging in a melting of horizons, so that he never meant that Jesus himself during his ministry could offer life, but that this would become possible only after Easter, after his death for sins, and that this was projected back into Jesus' ministry. But this simply does not work and confuses process (what we know went on) and perception (how the author saw it).[27] John does show historical awareness, at least salvation-historical awareness. He does employ the language of what is now and not yet (e.g., 7:39 – Jesus was not yet glorified so the Spirit was not yet given; 12:16 only after Jesus was glorified

[24] On the allusion to Exod 33:7–34:35 see Beutler, "Johannes-Prolog," 95–96 (n. 6), and H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 104, who rightly observes that the author is also alluding to Ben Sira on seeing God (Sir 43:31) and on Sophia's tenting among people (Sir 24:8) (107).

[25] Beutler, "Johannes-Prolog," 95 (n. 6) writes: "Das einzig Neue findet sich in dem johanneischen Text in der Tatsache, dass Gott sich in Jesus Christus offenbart hat, dem Logos, der Fleisch wurde."

[26] On the contrast in 1:14–18 between what was good and the better which replaces it, the gift in place of the former gift, and the sight which the former could not make possible, see Loader, "Law and Ethics," 152–53 (n. 11). Theobald, *Evangelium nach Johannes: 1–12*, 142 (n. 4) writes in relation to John's soteriology in contrast to that of the synagogues of his context: "Was deren Gravitationszentrum ist – die Tora als Lebensordnung und Weg zum Heil –, das reklamiert der Prolog für Christus und überträgt es auf ihn als die einzige Quelle von 'Licht' und 'Leben'."

[27] Bennema, *Saving Wisdom*, 34 (n. 22) notes in this regard: "The seminal work of Porsch (but also that of Loader) has been seriously neglected."

was the messianic understanding of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem realised). Above all he does interpret Jesus' death as bringing about major change, but that is not a change which now makes life possible which Jesus could/did not offer before. The change is that, having been rejected – a critical event in the life of the world because it exposed evil and functioned as an act of judgement (12;31; 13:31; 16:11) – and been lifted up on the cross, paradoxically Jesus was exalted to heavenly glory and from there could send the Spirit and the disciples to produce the far wider and greater mission of proclaiming this message of life to the world (12:23–24, 32; 14:12–17). It remains the same offer of life. Nothing in the elaborate final instructions of Jesus to the disciples suggests that the offer is different in quality from the life already offered by Jesus in his ministry (14:17). The soteriology remains in that sense the same and is thoroughly Jewish in structure.

Finally let me reflect on the implications of such a soteriology. In effect the author has reworked the Jesus tradition and its stories so that it becomes a repeated refrain, variations on a single theme. In a way which parallels his use of Old Testament tradition he homogenises diverse Jesus traditions to convey a simple message: that Jesus is the Son who offers life. The effect is both to raise Jesus' profile to the level of the divine, so that it reflects what is said of the logos in the prologue's *inclusio*, that he is θεός (1:1) and is θεός of an only kind (1:18), and in a sense to collapse it, so that in effect to respond to Jesus is to respond to God. Jesus all but disappears in the process of elevation to become the face of God, which eventually had to be rationalised in the doctrine of the Trinity. Essentially, the issue is the relationship with the God who offers life. John never differentiates the life God offers from the life Jesus offers. The result is a Gospel which has universal appeal, because despite its particularist christology, it has in effect marginalised Jesus, as it were, by all but absorbing him into the life of God, coming very close to turning him into a metaphor for God. Paradoxically, the prologue helps us see how in such an elevation of Jesus he effectively disappears and we are in effect presented with a thoroughly Jewish soteriology of life, offered in relationship with God, but with its Torah now defined in terms of engaging in and expressing a relationship of love through the Son.

Established patterns of spirituality are powerful and can exert themselves in new situations even where radical breaks or discontinuities may appear. In the case of the Fourth Gospel the spirituality of relating to God as life and light, and finding food and water, was apparently deeply engrained in the form of Jewish spirituality in the background of the Johannine community. There it was expressed in relation to God and God's word, in particular, the gift of Torah. There has been a radical break and discontinuity based on the high christological claims made by these Jews and others in

the community who became Christ-believers, to the extent that Jesus was effectively made to usurp the role of Torah and was identified as alone the Word, light and life, and bearer of food and water. The original Jewish spirituality remains, however, a controlling factor in this, so that effectively the spirituality does not change, but only the way it is mediated. Ironically this even affects the discontinuous element, the role of Jesus, because he is portrayed less as a human being (never denied) and more as embodiment of God's Word in a way that then almost merges him into the being of God, analogous to Jewish understanding of Torah/Word/Wisdom.

By contrast, other early Christian spiritualities focused less on the person and personal relationship with the Christ and more on saving events, in particular, the vicarious death of Jesus or his death as victory over the prince of this world, traditions known to the author of the Gospel, but not given the central significance which they have elsewhere, the former, for instance, in Paul. What is saving about Jesus for John is what was saving about Torah, and ultimately about God, namely God's life and love. The central focus is ultimately not a saving event but a saving person, namely the person of God. The soteriological event for the Fourth Gospel is the drawing near of God in the person of Jesus, not primarily his death nor primarily some bridging of human and divine in the incarnation nor the dethroning of the prince of this world, but the sheer fact of God.

While faith and spirituality look strikingly similar between John and Judaism, the difference is not only that one finds life in relation to God by following Torah in the one and in the other by following Jesus, but also in the accompanying social reality, which, as van der Watt, notes means belonging to the family of believers, in contrast to the synagogue.[28] On the ground, such faith, more than merely cognitive, expresses itself in existential engagement and relationship, which then is the context for the affirmation that in this way life with God is given, mediated by the Spirit.[29]

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[28] Van der Watt, "Salvation," 123–27 (n. 2) speaks of a resocialisation.

[29] On the similarities and differences between what Jews said of Sophia and what John says of Jesus see also A. T. Glicksman, "Beyond Sophia: The Sapiential Portrayal of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and Its Ethical Implications for the Johannine Community," in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: 'Implicit Ethics' in the Johannine Writings* (ed. J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann; Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik/Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 83–101, who notes that it is never said of Sophia that she becomes incarnate (89), is the truth (90) or life (91), or is universal (91), or is an example (100). At least the first statement is true, although indwelling is a feature. He suggests that "the Johannine community did not merely identify Jesus as Sophia but as *more* than the Jewish notion of Sophia. In other words, Jesus is the new *and improved* Sophia" (99). On the expression of faith Glicksman writes: "To obey Jesus' words and to imitate his actions, insofar as this is possible, would be the ultimate wisdom" (100). Bennema, *Saving Wisdom*, 157 (n. 22): "John's soteriology is a variety of Wisdom soteriology, in that John uses the soteriological figure of Wisdom to

Soteriology in John is in some sense an inappropriate category. What is saving is ultimately not an event or an achievement, but God and God's life offered through the Word who came to his own and became flesh to make God and God's gift of life known. The coming and the going suggest presence and absence, which is then bridged by the coming of the Spirit; for essentially it is the life of God which is offered. There is little by way of revelation except that the Son offered this life, now re-presented in the Spirit. The prologue does not tell the whole story, but merely hints at the crisis of rejection and the Son's vindication to return to the bosom of the Father. That return is neither an exit nor a separate saving act, though the author appears to know and incorporate traditions which reflected such an understanding. It is a climax, a moment of exposure, a revelation of how far that offer of love would go to finish its task and how far hate would go to snuff it out.

The spirituality, the focus and structure of faith, remains what it had been in Judaism, but the soteriology or better the life now found expression not in synagogue communities but in fellowships of Jesus-believers and its manifestation of doing God's will was based not in Torah's wisdom but in the command to love on the lips of Jesus and life generated which made such love possible. The prologue sets the parameters for this understanding of soteriology, but the farewell discourses show us what it looks like in social reality: life with God offered through the Son, now mediated through the Spirit, borne of love and brought to expression in loving community, which in concrete terms included support for survival, especially of the poor. It also had a future dimension: John embraces traditions concerning resurrection (6:39–44), judgement (5:28), and parousia (14:3), as he does those of his death, but ultimately hope is focused not on some future prospect of liberation, let alone Jewish restoration eschatology, but eternal life now in a relationship, whose goal is that, as he returns to the Father, so his own will follow to be one with him where he is (12:26; 13:33; 14:1–3; 17:24). The response of faith to encounter with the Word (not words), the incarnate Son, is the moment of judgement and the move from death to life, from darkness to light (5:24; 17:3; 1:18).

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present Jesus and his salvific mission." On Spirit he writes: "The Spirit creates a saving relationship between the believer and God, i.e., brings a person into such a relationship with the Father and Son, through the mediation of saving wisdom which is itself present in Jesus' revelatory teaching" (37). On Wisdom as salvific in Judaism see his discussion on pp. 42–99. "The same Spirit and Wisdom that are at work together in creation are also co-operating with one another in salvation" (96). Thompson, *God of the Gospel of John*, 143 (n. 23) writes: "Because knowledge of God is described in terms not only of seeing but also of hearing God, 'seeing' cannot be understood simply as contemplation of God, of a beatific vision simply for its own sake. The emphasis on response and obedience introduced by hearing forbids the reduction of 'seeing' to contemplating an object."

John 1:1 – A "Riddle"?

Grammar and Syntax Considered

Jan G. van der Watt

I. Introduction

John 1:1 is one of the most famous opening lines in the Bible. It has received its proportionate attention in scholarship,[1] which focuses more on the theological than the grammatical aspects of this text.[2] Problems within the tradition of interpretation are multiple. Theologically the relation between God and Logos offers an evergreen topic for discussion.[3] How can the Logos be with God, but also be God, be it a god or the God? Who is the Logos and what does the pre-existence of the Logos imply? Is Jesus the Logos or is Jesus just an expression of the Logos? Grammatically, how should the anarthrous nouns in 1:1 be understood? What is the semantic intensity and range of the preposition πρός? How should 1:1 be understood syntactically and structurally? These numerous issues and questions illustrate one point: within the tradition of interpretation of this short verse there is, proportionally, an excessive number of issues that need clarification. Petersen,[4] for instance, argued strongly for what could be called riddle-like language in John, also in 1:1 by saying, "the words [in the Prologue] do not mean or denote what they do in everyday language because they are used to refer to things that are not part of everyday experience" (8) and this "represents the fundamental semantic problem in his [John's] use of language" (9).[5]

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[1] Apart from comprehensive treatment in virtually all commentaries, cf., for instance, E. L. Miller, *Salvation History in the Prologue of John* (NovTSup 60; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[2] This article utilizes research that also formed the basis of J. G. van der Watt and C. Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 22 (2009): 1–52. Some of the paragraphs overlap.

[3] Cf. N. R. Petersen, *The Gospel and the Theology of Light* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 9–11.

[4] Ibid., 9–11.

[5] Ibid., 9, he illustrates the problem when he remarks, "the words 'Word' and 'God' cannot have their conventional meaning or denotation because they are used to refer to the same entity, which is neither of the entities they are usually used to refer to. Conse-

It is therefore a realistic question whether this introductory statement is indeed intended to be clear in its meaning; was the intention not rather that it should have riddle-like qualities? The first verse of the Gospel appears to confront the reader with ambiguities that invite further clarification, clarification that is not directly available in the verse itself, but is rather, *inter alia*, to be looked for in the rest of the Gospel.[6]

Riddles were well known in ancient times, also in Biblical socio-cultural contexts.[7] As is the case with other literary phenomena, the definition of "riddles" varies considerably, although some basic features are acknowledged by most if not all. It is agreed that a basic feature of a riddle is that it contains elements of information that are hidden to some, while those who have the "key" to the riddle understand what is said. As Thatcher[8] describes it, a riddle is "a concise, interrogative unit of language that intentionally and at once conceals and reveals its referent with a single set of signs." The meaning is not immediately clear and is veiled through the multiple or even hidden meanings of a word,[9] or the surprising use of grammar.[10] The addressee must be aware of the semantic and referential "manipulation" in the communication to be able to come to proper understanding. "That

quently, without further information (which the narrator does not provide), we can know neither the meaning of his words nor the referent of his statement."

[6] Cf. the articles in the rest of this volume, pointing to the direct relation between the Prologue and the rest of the Gospel.

[7] Riddles are found in both the Old and the New Testament. Cf. J. L. Crenshaw, "Riddles," *ABD* 5:721–23, and the quote from W. A. Elwell and B. J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1860: "In the NT riddles figure infrequently. The various 'hard sayings' of Jesus (e.g., Joh 6:60) are difficult to accept and are equally as hard to understand." Cf. also W. R. Goodman, "Riddle," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers, and A. B. Beck; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1128. T. Thatcher, "The Riddles of Jesus in the Johannine Dialogues," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (ed. R. T. Fortna and T. Thatcher; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 263–80, here 269, seems convinced that the Fourth Evangelist "must have been relatively familiar with oral riddles and riddling sessions." I. H. Leroy, *Rätsel und Mißverständnis* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1968), 6–7, argues that the misunderstandings in John are the result of riddles.

[8] T. Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Story in Tradition and Folklore* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 179. On pages 181–83 he gives four criteria he uses to identify riddles: (1) if the narrator states that the character intends to blur the referent by way of παροιμία, (2) if the character indicates that he or she is intentionally ambigious, (3) if the audience is confused and finds the referent ambigious, and (4) if the words are used contrary to the normal conventions of language or logic.

[9] Cf. D. R. Bratcher, "Riddle," *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (ed. P. J. Achtemeier; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 871.

[10] As M. H. Manser, "Riddles," *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), ad loc., remarks: "They may be compared with other forms of obscure communication and contrasted with clear messages."

simultaneous clue and trap resulted from cipher language, imagery that functioned on two levels, the ordinary meaning and a special sense recognized only by perceptive persons."[11] This implies that increased specific knowledge or explanation of a riddle is necessary to understand that riddle (see Prov 1:5–6; cf. also Sir 39:3).[12] This, of course, stimulates the re-reading and re-thinking of the particular riddle in order to explore its meaning. Ingram, in discussing wisdom riddles, remarks that "ambiguity is a deliberate didactic device" that encourages readers to grapple with the meaning of the words.[13] This would imply consistent reconsideration of the riddle in the light of new and additional information.

Thatcher points out that "a large number of verses [in John] … may be categorized as 'riddles.'"[14] He gives close attention to the ambiguities in the teachings of the Johannine Jesus and argues that "some statements are ambiguous because they seem to require answers that the listener would consider impossible," since it goes beyond the bounds of normal logic.[15] By this "apparent impossibility" the worldview of the reader is challenged. Special shared knowledge and proper understanding of the logic within the saying are needed to understand the riddle. This ability to understand is usually the mark of insiders, participating in the tradition of the particular group.[16]

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[11] Crenshaw, *Riddles*, 721 (n. 7).

[12] Cf. the play with questions and answers in the account of the visit of the queen of Sheba to King Solomon (1Kgs 10:1–5; 2Chr 9:1–4). The following quote from Crenshaw, *Riddles*, 722 (n. 7) is worthwhile quoting: "This story provides valuable information about the vocabulary connected with the act of riddling: *māṣāʾ* for discovering the solution, *pātāḥ* for opening the riddle, *nāgad* in the *Hiphʿil* for posing the riddle. The account in 1 Kgs 10:1–5 suggests that the latter verb also functioned to describe the process of informing the riddler of the correct answer. The two Hebrew words for riddle, *ḥîdâ* and *mĕlîṣâ*, push the symbolic sense of *māšāl* further still. The two Greek words for riddle, *enigma* and *griphos*, capture the twofold nature of riddles, their mysterious clue and hidden trap."

[13] D. Ingram, "The Riddle of Qohelet and Qohelet the Riddler," *JSOT* 37 (2013): 485–509.

[14] Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John*, 1 (n. 8); idem, "The Riddles of Jesus in the Johannine Dialogues" (n. 7); idem, *Jesus the Riddler: The Power of Ambiguity in the Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006); idem, "The Riddle of the Baptist and the Genesis of the Prologue: John 1:1–18 in Oral/Aural Media Culture," in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (ed. A. Le Donne and T. Thatcher; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 29–49.

[15] Thatcher, "The Riddles of Jesus in the Johannine Dialogues," 268 (n. 7).

[16] Ibid., 266. He quotes Slotkin, who showed that the solution of riddles needs special knowledge that usually comes from knowing the tradition within which the riddle is presented.

Anderson,[17] who wrote a book called *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel*, does not pay attention to riddles as rhetorical and literary devices in the Gospel, but approaches what he calls the riddles of the Fourth Gospel from the perspective of "the perplexing literary, historical, and theological issues one runs into when taking the Gospel of John seriously." What we have in 1:1 might also reflect what Anderson has in mind.

The aim of this article is to investigate whether the grammar and syntax of 1:1 specifically have riddle-like characteristics.[18] The basic question that will be considered in this article is therefore: do the grammar and syntax of 1:1 require such special knowledge to be understood? In other words, would a Hellenist be able to understand the grammar and syntax, or would she be in need of extra knowledge to make sense of the grammar and syntax?

Since interpretation is a comprehensive process including grammatical, linguistic, literary, historical, theological, social, and other aspects; it is important to establish what the contribution of the grammar and syntax is to the interpretative process as a whole. The question is even more relevant in the light of Petersen's[19] remark that John uses grammar of everyday language, which argues against riddle-like language in 1:1. On the one hand there is the view that the grammar of 1:1 is full of problems, therefore the intense discussions, but on the other hand that it is ordinary everyday grammar.

This is not denying that many other factors (i.e., socio-historical, rhetorical, theological, etc.) that suggest that this verse should be understood in a riddle-like sense, also play a role; but these factors will not receive attention here. It must, however, be stressed that the final decision on this issue may only be made after the total picture is considered. The issue under discussion here is only what contribution the grammar and syntax can or may make to the whole.

II. Grammatical Issues in John 1:1

Three grammatical constructions in John 1:1 draw attention: the first is the fact that the phrase, Ἐν ἀρχῇ (1a), is anarthrous, although it seems to be definite. The second is the use of πρός in πρὸς τὸν θεόν (1b); and the third

[17] P. N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

[18] Thatcher, in his groundbreaking works on riddles in John, does not treat 1:1 as riddle, mainly because of his definition of riddles and his approach of focusing on Jesus. Cf. Thatcher, "The Riddles of Jesus in the Johannine Dialogues," 269 (n. 7); cf. also idem, *The Riddles of Jesus in John*, 1 (n. 8); idem, *Jesus the Riddler* (n. 14); idem, "The Riddle of the Baptist and the Genesis of the Prologue" (n. 14).

[19] Petersen, *Gospel*, 10 (n. 3).

is the prepositional use of the predicate in the phrase καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (1c).

1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ*: Definite or Indefinite?*

The grammatical issue to be addressed is what is the significance of the absence of the article in this phrase, if any? Should it be translated as reference to "*a* beginning" or as "*the* beginning,"[20] even though the preposition is lacking?

Several explanations are offered. First, the *context* is emphasized as playing the major role in explaining the referents in this case. Porter[21] points out it is not the absence or presence of an article that determines whether a substantive is particular or non-particular. It depends on the context. He argues that "individual" items may in any case be specified without the use of an article. According to Dana and Mantey,[22] the absence of the article may be explained in the light of the fact that a prepositional phrase usually implies some idea of quality or kind. Since, contextually, it characterizes Jesus as pre-existent – thus defining his nature – it should be definite. Caragounis[23] also argues that it is clear from the context that "beginning" should be understood as "before creation," since the rest of the context of 1:1–3 narrates creation. Theologically this means that ἐν ἀρχῇ should not be understood as "*a* beginning" but "*the* beginning."

Second, and related to the above, some suggest that it is a matter of theology based on *intertextuality* within a broader context. According to this explanation, 1:1a parallels Gen 1:1 (LXX), where the anarthrous phrase is used although the reference is not to "a beginning" but to "the beginning." With this being stated, the grammatical problem does not receive further attention and seems to be solved, which is of course not the case. The problem is only transferred to Gen 1:1.

Thirdly, the issue is approached from a *grammatical* angle. Wallace[24] points out that, when a noun is the object of a preposition – as is the case in 1a – it does not require an article to be definite. If it has the article, it must be definite; if the article is absent, it may be definite. He further

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[20] The use of ἀρχή in this context is rather distinctive. For the reference of this word see R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John*, Vol. 1 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 232; R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (20th ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 15.

[21] S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 105.

[22] H. E. Dana, and S. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 110, 139–40, 148–50, 168.

[23] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 99 (n. 2).

[24] D. B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 247.

explains the phenomenon by remarking that the noun in 1a is monadic, which further justifies its definiteness.

The most comprehensive treatment of this issue is by Caragounis,[25] who also argues for definiteness in spite of the lack of the article. He uses *statistical* data to argue much of his case. He approaches the issue from the idiomatic use[26] of this phrase within Greek language. He points out that, in Greek literature from Homer to the sixteenth century C.E., the anarthrous expression ἐν ἀρχῇ is found 4,178 times in basically two semantic fields: a) "beginning" in either the temporal or local sense; and b) "power." In contrast, the arthrous phrase is only found 376 times in the same body of literature: 320 times used in the semantic field of "beginning"; and 56 times as "power." His conclusion follows that in such a case the Greeks statistically seemed to prefer the use of the anarthrous phrase, which means that it could be described as an idiomatic feature of Greek.

Caragounis[27] takes his argument a step further, asking whether there is a difference in meaning between these anarthrous and arthrous phrases? Starting from the statistics, he doubts whether the indefinite meaning was intended in all 4,178 contexts, while a definite meaning was only intended in 376 contexts. To support this first observation, he compares the uses and shows that these phrases were often used interchangeably in Greek literature.[28] This is also true of the 29 occurrences in the LXX, where in almost all of these cases either the one or the other phrase could be used without difference in meaning.

In conclusion, it seems that the "grammatical problem" here is not a real issue, or at least it would not have been for Greek-speaking people during the time of the New Testament, who would have identified the definite use of this anarthrous phrase as idiomatic to Greek. It is highly unlikely that a Hellenistic Greek would have experienced this phrase as riddle-like.

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[25] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 97–100 (n. 2).

[26] J. H. Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek* (5th rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 21–24, 39, also interprets the phrase as an idiom arguing that in the case of such an idiom of time and place the object of the preposition needs no article to be definite.

[27] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 97–99 (n. 2).

[28] Ibid., 97–100, he also points out that, in some New Testament editions of the Greek text of John 1:1, the arthrous phrase is used, pointing to the possibility that, for these editors, the anarthrous and arthrous phrases were equivalent.

2. Is the πρός *in* πρὸς τὸν θεόν *Grammatically Used in a Riddle-Like Way?*

Of the three phrases, this seems to be the least problematic. Considering the majority of Bible translations, the translation of πρὸς τὸν θεόν seems to be evident: "(the Word) was *with* God."[29] However, what the semantic power of πρός exactly is, is not all that evident, in spite of the seeming ease of translating it. The wide scope of the lexicographic potential of πρός (+ acc.)[30] further complicates matters.[31]

Liddell[32] indicates that, when objects are used with πρός, the word usually "expresses motion or direction towards an object," both with hostile or without hostile intention.[33] In cases where the relation between two

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[29] Considering different translations, the following pattern emerges: Nearly all translations translate, "The Word was *with* God", for instance, ESV, 1890 Darby, ASV, CEV, GNT, ISV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NIV, NLV, NCV, KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NAU, NJB, WEB, DRA, TNT, MNT, Young's, German Einheitsübersetzung (*bei*), Luther 1984, Elberfelder, Gute Nachricht (*bei*), Bibelen kanoniske Bøger (*hos*), Dutch 1951, Dutch Statenvertaling (*bij*), Dutch GNB, Leidse vertaling (*bij*), Afrikaans Old and New Translation, Afrikaans Living Translation, Die Boodskap (*by*). Except for paraphrases, there are basically no exceptions. BBE (1949/64), however, translates, "the Word was in relation with God."

[30] According to H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon, with a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), ad loc. πρός with the acc. occurs in Greek literature in the following main senses: a) of Place: 1. *towards, to*; 2. with verbs of prior motion: *upon, against*; in hostile sense: *against*; of reciprocal actions: *with, towards, for, at the hands of*; of legal actions: *towards, before, with*; b) of Time: 1. *towards, near, at, about*; c) of Relation: 1. *in reference, in respect of, touching, relatively to; in consequence of; with a view to*; 4. *in proportion to, in relation to, in comparison with*; 5. *in* or *by reference to, according to, in view of*; *with the accompaniment of* (mus. instr.); d) of Numbers: *up to, about*.

[31] The following summary reflects the use of πρός in the Gospel according to John:

* Movement towards somebody: 1:19, 29, 42, 47; 3:2, 20, 21, 26; 4:30, 40, 47; 5:33, 40; 6:5, 17, 35, 37, 44, 45, 65, 68; 7:33, 37, 45, 50; 8:2; 9:13; 10:41; 11:3, 15, 19, 29, 45, 46; 12:32; 13:1, 3, 6; 14:3, 6, 12, 18, 23, 28; 16:5, 7, 10, 28; 17:11, 13; 18:13, 24, 29, 38; 19:3, 39; 20:2, 10, 17;

* Saying something to somebody: 2:3; 3:4; 4:15, 33, 48, 49; 6:28, 34, (52); 7:3, 35, 50; 8:31, 33, 57; (10:35); 11:21; 12:19; 16:17; 19:24;

* Location: Fell/knelt *at* his feet 11:32; Peter stood *by* the door 18:16; Mary stood *by* the tomb 20:11; One *at* the head and the other *at* the feet 20:12;

* Expressions: The two cases in the Prologue: He was *with* God 1:1, 2; The lands are white *for* harvest 4:35; *For* a time 5:35; Accuse *to* the Father 5:45; This sickness is not *unto* death 11:4; *Why* 13:28; What is it with you? 21:22, 23.

[32] Liddell et al., *Lexicon*, 1497 (n. 30).

[33] According to Porter, *Idioms*, 172 (n. 21) πρός is often connected with movement. Cf. also E. V. N. Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Schribner, 1965), 158; W. E. Vine, *New Testament Greek Grammar: A Course of Self-*

people or objects is described, it is usually translated as "with."[34] In this case the idea of "movement towards …" is toned down. Although Arndt[35] notes that the use of πρός (+ acc.) generically is a "marker of movement or orientation toward someone/something," he mentions that, in 1:1b, it should be translated with "*by, at, near* πρός τινα εἶναι be (in company) with someone." Louw & Nida[36] also classify the use in 1:1b as "association," noting that πρός is "a marker of association, often with the implication of interrelationships – 'with, before.'"

Lexicographically, therefore, πρός may refer to *movement towards*; or, alternatively, just refer to being *with* somebody or something (the latter is the preferable use in 1:1b, according to lexicographers). However, since both options are possible, interpretations of the semantic force of πρός in 1:1b deviate at this point, especially among theologians, who like the idea of movement towards to intensify the relationship expressed here.

Corresponding to this lexicographical material two lines of argument developed.

One line of interpreting πρός therefore emphasizes the idea of orientation towards, even movement towards, an object. This approach takes different forms. Porter,[37] for instance, opines that translating πρός with "with" does not do full justice to this use of the preposition. There must be more: the preposition suggests a "face-to-face" presence in 1:1b. La Potterie[38] also argues in favour of πρός (+ acc.) retaining its strong dynamic sense. Supporting his argument, he points out that 1:1 and 1:18 should be interpreted in parallel, due to an *inclusio*, which implies that πρός (+ acc. – v. 1) should be paralleled with the εἰς τὸν κόλπον (v. 18). It is, however, doubtful whether one can conclusively prove semantic identity from such an assumed structural feature.

Abbott[39] is convinced of an active sense of "in familiar intercourse with," "close contact with," sometimes hostile, but in any case close, communication, rather than "at home with." He then understands 1:1b as "the word

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Help for the Layman (London: Oliphants, 1965), 203; Greenlee, *Grammar*, 21–24, 39 (n. 26); Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, 110 (n. 22).

[34] C. K. *Barrett*, *The Gospel according to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 155, points out that "πρός with the accusative can hardly mean 'in the presence of' in classical Greek, but this meaning is unquestionable in New Testament Greek (…), and the Hellenistic usage makes it unnecessary to see here the influence in translation of the Aramaic לוות."

[35] BDAG, ad loc.

[36] J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 791.

[37] Porter, *Idioms*, 173 (n. 21).

[38] I. de La Potterie, "L'emploi dynamique de εἰς dans Saint Jean et ses incidences théologiques," *Bib* 43 (1962): 366–87.

[39] E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), 133–35, 273–75, 286, 413, 443–44.

was *in converse with* God," which prepares the way for the thought of a Mediator.[40] Young[41] also prefers the idea of active communication rather than just being with, which suggest more passive association, while Janse van Rensburg[42] goes a little further, explaining it semantically as "a marker of relation involving potential interaction."

The other line of interpretation, which is supported by most translations, is satisfied that the semantic potential is sufficiently expressed here by translating πρός with "with." Winer[43] acknowledges that πρός may be used with verbs of motion or mere direction in the meaning of "*to, toward*." However, with a noun in the accusative, πρός appears to lose the import of the accusative and to signify simply *with*, particularly before names of persons.[44] John 1:1b is a case of the latter use. This view also finds support from Moule,[45] who opines that the preposition in 1c is "punctiliar" (a point in space), suggesting that here not too much should be read into the use of

[40] Ibid., 443–44, continues, making an interesting suggestion. He maintains that πρός (+ acc.), in classical Greek, is often used for expressions like "having regard to." Greek readers, therefore, might have taken πρὸς τὸν θεόν as "having regard to God." This would then correspond with ζῆν πρὸς τίνας in classical Greek, which might be translated as "*to live in absolute devotion to anyone*." The idea of "[looking] *toward*," or "*having regard to*," God fits with the theology of John according to him. John probably combined the spiritual meaning of being "*devoted to*" with the more local meaning of *conversing with*, the former being the more prominent.

[41] R. A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 66, 101.

[42] J. Janse van Rensburg, "A New Reference Grammar for the Greek New Testament: Exploratory Remarks on a Methodology," *Neot* 27 (1993): 143. C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 370, emphasizes the relational aspect expressed by πρός.

[43] G. B. Winer, *A Grammar of the New Testament Diction: Intended as an Introduction to the Critical Study of the Greek New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1860), 134, 423. J. A. Brooks and C. L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), 48–50, 140 include πρὸς τὸν θεόν in their discussion of the adverbial accusative of measure. According to them the substantive indicates how far the action of the verb extends. Sometimes, especially with prepositions, the idea of extension is not very prominent. In such instances, the accusative indicates time and place in much the same way as does the locative, as is the case in the phrase ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν in 1:1b.

[44] This is also stated by R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1: *I–XII* (London: Chapman, 1971), 4–5, who acknowledges that πρός with the accusative usually refers to motion. In Hellenistic Greek the distinction between prepositions of location and motion were generally weakened, allowing for the meaning of accompaniment.

[45] C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 53, 76, 115–16.

πρός.[46] In the same vein Wallace[47] explains that a transitive preposition may be used with a stative verb (in which cases the preposition and verb do not match), like in John 1:1b: in this case πρός should be translated as "with."[48] Here the preposition's force is overridden by the verb and that is not extraordinary.[49]

Another angle taken utilizes comparative linguistics. On the assumption of Aramaic influences on the language of John, both Barrett[50] and Turner[51] argue that the influence of the Aramaic לות contributed to the fact that πρός (+ acc.) may simply be translated with "with" in 1b. Their feeling is that this expression does not mean much more than "with," motivated by Aramaic influence.

Zerwick[52] and Bultmann[53] both related πρός (with the accusative) with παρά (with the dative), although with different intentions. Zerwick wanted to emphasize the contrast, while Bultmann pointed to the semantic similarity. Zerwick argues that, in John's literature, πρός is usually used in a dynamic sense (about 100 times) which, in our case, may be understood as one of active personal relationship; while the sense of being "with someone" is always rendered by παρά (with the dative) or μετά (with the genitive). Bultmann[54] bases his argument – that πρός (with the accusative) should be seen as parallel for παρά (with the dative) – on Semitic influences on the Greek. Caragounis argued this point – namely, that πρός with the accusative is used in Hellenistic Greek as alternative to παρά with the dative – extensively.[55] It is interesting to follow Caragounis's argument in this regard.

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[46] It should be noted that πρός is used several times in this Gospel to simply identify a location (11:32; 18:16; 20:11, 12). The possibility of 1:1b meaning that Jesus was simply at the location of (by/with/at) God should be considered as an option.

[47] Wallace, *Syntax*, 359 (n. 24).

[48] Schnackenburg, *John I*, 234 (n. 20) also denies that the idea of movement, inherent to the preposition, is intended here. He sees it as equivalent with παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, which is according to him typical Koine. See also U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 31.

[49] Wallace, *Syntax*, 359 (n. 24) gives a long list of similar instances in the New Testament.

[50] Barrett, *John*, 24, 27 (n. 34).

[51] J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament*, vols. III and IV by N. Turner, *Style* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 71.

[52] M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, English edition adapted from the fourth Latin edition (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 33–34, 55–56.

[53] Bultmann, *Johannes*, 16 (n. 20).

[54] Ibid., 16.

[55] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 105–10 (n. 2).

Caragounis[56] points out that, from the beginning up to the sixteenth century C.E., the preposition πρός is used about 400,000 times, 3851 of those times in the Septuagint. Caragounis investigated a significant number of these relevant occurrences,[57] especially from the New Testament, and discovered that the expression *someone* (nom.) *being* πρός *someone* (acc.) is typical of the New Testament, although it is absent from earlier literature, like the Septuagint and the other earlier material he investigated.[58] This leads Caragounis to conclude that this expression must be a later development, coinciding with the New Testament.[59] But this should not be interpreted as saying that the expression was created to describe the relation between the Logos and God, since it is used at least 12 other times in the New Testament for ordinary human relationships. What the evidence does force Caragounis to conclude is that the meaning of this expression evolved and was (in New Testament times) used alongside other alternative structures with the same meaning, especially παρά (+ dat.).[60] Early *Christian* Greek authors did not seem to have understood this use of πρός as unique or, for that matter, "ungrammatical," but used it as an alternative to παρά (+ dat.).

By coming to this conclusion, Caragounis rejects the interpretation of πρός in 1b as dynamic, active communication – these are theological nuances and are not based on strict linguistic considerations. This, of course, raises the question as to what the influence of the broader context is on the meaning of a word. What Caragounis did is excellent lexicographic work, indicating the potential for the use of the word. But does the associative use within a context not also contribute to the meaning of a particular word, which would then suggest a possible interpretation along the lines that Caragounis rejects? In any case, for the purpose of this article, it suffices to note that, grammatically, this construction is not unique and fell within acceptable Greek usage. That, again, leads us to the conclusion that, from a grammatical point of view, this phrase is also not riddle-like. This conclusion, however, does not say anything about its theological qualities.

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[56] Ibid., 105–06.

[57] Relevant occurrences reflected the structure: *someone/something is/was* πρός *someone/something*.

[58] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 105–07 (n. 2).

[59] Ibid., 109.

[60] Ibid., 110; on page 109 he points out that A. N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar* (London: Macmillan, 1897), ad loc., already indicated that πρός could be used as alternative for παρά (+ dat.). Caragounis's own investigation of the use in early Christian authors confirmed this fact.

III. Is the Absence of the Preposition in the Phrase καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος in 1c Irregular?

The absence of the article in the pre-verbal predicate nominative in 1c is a source of dispute.[61] There are those who see θεός as definite, while others argue that θεός is indefinite, while still others are of the opinion that the two nouns in 1c should be seen as interchangeable. Some favour the qualitative use of θεός, others see it as an idiom, and there are those who interpret it from theological points of departure.[62] This illustrates the enigma created around this phrase.

1. A Definite Use

The use of the anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominative in 1c is the contentious issue here. Colwell[63] formulated the following rule, that subsequently became known as "Colwell's rule": "Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article … a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a 'qualitative' noun, solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite

[61] An overwhelming number of translations choose to translate, "the Word was God," for instance, ESV, ASV, GNB, ISV, KJV, NKJV, NIV, NAV, NASV, NCV, RSV, NRSV, NJB, NLV, NAU, MNT, TNT, GNV, DRA, BBE, WEB, Young's, German Einheitsübersetzung, Elberfelder, Bibelen kanoniske Bøger, Dutch Statenvertaling, Dutch 1951, Dutch GNV, Leidse, Old Afrikaans translation, Die Boodskap. There are sporadic exceptions. The New Afrikaans translation and the NLB add "self" or "himself" to result in the following translation, "the Word was God himself (self God)." Bultmann, *Johannes*, 5 (n. 20) rejects this way of translating. The CEV adds "truly," "The word was truly God," while the Gute Nachricht translates, "in allem war es Gott gleich" (in everything it was equal to God). The Vulgata (*et Deus erat Verbum*), Luther 1984 ("Und Gott war das Wort"), as well as the NEB, for which C. H. Dodd was the editor ("What God was, the Word was") preserved the original word order.

[62] It should be noted that it is generally accepted that ὁ λόγος is a personification for Jesus, the Son. See G. R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 108; J. G. van der Watt, *Family of the King: Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (BIS 47; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 102, sees it as a metaphor.

[63] E. C. Colwell, "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *JBL* 52 (1933): 12–21. Porter, *Idioms*, 109 (n. 21), refers to the work of Colwell's article and L. C. McGaughy, *A Descriptive Analysis of EINAI as a Linking Verb in New Testament Greek* (SBLDS 6; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1972) in this regard. The latter argued that, if two substantives stand in appropriate grammatical accord, there are three possibilities for determining the subject: a) "if one substantive is a demonstrative or relative pronoun, it is the subject"; b) "if one of the substantives has an article, it is the subject"; and/or c) "if both have articles, the one first in order is the subject." See also Keener, *John I*, 371 (n. 42).

noun." This highlights the strong link between formal grammar and context. Wallace[64] noted that many scholars interpreted this rule as meaning that an anarthrous predicate nominative that precedes a verb is always definite, but this is not what Colwell intended. This misunderstanding often occurs in the interpretation of John 1:1c.[65] Dennison[66] points out that Colwell did say that a definite predicate nominative that precedes the verb is usually anarthrous, but that he did not say the converse, namely, that an anarthrous predicative nominative that precedes the verb is usually definite.

Wallace[67] explains that the usage of a predicate nominative[68] is very common in Greek. Although there are exceptions (forming a second type of construction), Wallace remarks that the "equation of subject and predicative nominative does not necessarily – or even normally – imply complete correspondence (e.g., as in the interchangeability of A = B, B = A in a mathematical formula[69]). Rather, the predicative nominative normally describes a larger category (or *state*) to which the subject belongs." In English, the subject needs to be translated first, but the word order in Greek is more flexible, allowing for different possibilities. Accordingly, v. 1c should be translated as "the Word was God" and not "God was the Word"[70] since, generally speaking, the "subject will be distinguished from the predicate nominative by having the article."[71] Now, the question is: how do you distinguish between the subject and the predicative nominative if the word order does not guide you, as is the case in English? Wallace[72] offers a detailed explanation, noting two kinds of semantic relationships:

– The predicative nominative may describe the *class* to which the subject belongs, called a *subset proposition*. The subject and predicative nominative are therefore not interchangeable, since "is" (cf. ἦν) does not necessarily means "equals": God is not fully encapsulated in the Word, but the Word fully belongs to the class of God.
– The *convertible proposition* indicates "an identical exchange." Complete interchangeability in translation is possible (equation mark).

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[64] Wallace, *Syntax*, 257 (n. 24).

[65] Ibid., 257–58.

[66] J. T. Dennison, "Symmetries of Equivalence: *Logos* and *Theos* in John 1:1–2," *Kerux* 18.1 (2003): 29–36, here 29–30, 36.

[67] Wallace, *Syntax*, 40 (n. 24).

[68] It is approximately the same as the subject of a sentence with an equative verb.

[69] Wallace, *Syntax*, 41 (n. 24), remarks that one of the fundamental flaws in the thinking of the Jehovah's Witnesses is the assumption that the "grammatical equative verb bears the same force as the mathematical equal sign."

[70] Ibid., 41.

[71] Ibid., 242–43.

[72] Ibid., 41–43.

This leads the interpreter to answer two questions: a) How can the subject be distinguished from the predicative nominative, since word order is not a criterion? b) What is the semantic relationship between the two (this will help in determining whether there is an equation or a subset)? Wallace[73] formulates a general "rule" that "when only *one* nominative substantive has such a grammatical 'tag' [i.e., article, pronoun, proper name], the semantic relationship will be that of particular (subject) to class (predicate nominative). That is, the construction will be a subset proposition." However, "when both substantives meet one of the three qualifications [tags] for [the] S[ubject], then they become interchangeable."[74]

With some reservation, Wallace[75] remarks the following about the proponents of such definite translations: "their basis has *usually* been a misunderstanding of Colwell's rule.[76] They have understood the rule to say that an anarthrous pre-verbal predicative noun will usually be definite";[77] implying that they are missing Colwell's emphasis on the influence of the context on the interpretative decision. Wallace[78] points out that, contextually, the use of θεός in v. 1b is articular and, since the same person is implied here, it could be definite. However, Wallace[79] mentions the following argument: "The vast majority of *definite* anarthrous pre-verbal predicate nominatives are monadic, in genitive constructions, or are proper names, none of which is true here, diminishing the likelihood of a definite θεός in Jn 1:1c."[80]

2. An Indefinite Use (the Word Was a God)

It is argued *inter alia* by the Jehovah's Witnesses that, since the previous phrase describes the Word as being *with* God, this phrase cannot be translated as "the Word is God." The absence of the definite article with θεός

[73] Ibid., 43.

[74] Ibid., 45. A detailed discussion regarding the grammar in this case can be found in ibid., 42–44. Only his conclusion in connection with John 1:1 is going to be reflected here.

[75] Ibid., 267–68.

[76] See also ibid., 290.

[77] Ibid., 267.

[78] Ibid., 268.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Although L. Schenke, *Johannes: Kommentar* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1998), 24–25, wants to maintain the distinction between the Logos and God (the Father), he nevertheless opts for translating v. 1c as follows: "Und Gott war Er, das Wort." He thus rejects the idea that we have an adjective ("göttlich") here, and emphasizes that the substantive "Gott" determines the Logos; opting for a unity that comes, to my mind, close to identity.

indicates that it should be translated as "the Word was *a* god."[81] In spite of the possibility of this translation, the arguments in favour are not strong at all. They seem to be based on the single – and simplistic – argument of the absence of the article. The inconsistency with which the New World Translation treats these types of constructions,[82] points to other motivations (perhaps theological or contextual) that influenced this particular translation. Therefore, this view is largely questioned and rejected by many.

3. Interchangeability

Although predicate nouns are usually anarthrous, the article may be inserted if the predicate noun is supposed to be a unique or notable instance, according to Turner,[83] thus distinguishing the subject from the complement. Therefore, v. 1c could just as well have read: ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεός,[84] since there need not be doctrinal significance in the dropping of the article – it is simply a matter of word-order.

This type of translation seems to be based on an incorrect assumption that equation verbs should be translated as convertible propositions. The explanation of the general rule, formulated in the section above, makes this translation highly unlikely.[85] Contextually and theologically it also poses problems, since in v. 1b θεός refers to the Father, which will then mean that – if the Word is God – he should also be the Father.

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[81] Wallace, *Syntax*, 243 (n. 24), notes that it is not necessary for a noun to have the article in order for it to be definite. Young, *Greek*, 66, 101 (n. 41); Brown, *John*, 1:5 (n. 44).

[82] See I. Croft's, "The New World Translation and Its Critics," available online: http://www.freeminds.org/doctrine/nwt.htm, 1988, ad loc. Criticism of the inconsistent translation of the Greek in the New World Translation: "In John 1:1, because of the lack of an article ('the'), the Word is called 'a god.' However, in verse 18, which also has no article, the word 'God' is capitalized. There are many examples of similar character." Further, of the nearly 300 occurrences of the anarthrous θεός about 20 are translated indefinite. See also Wallace, *Syntax*, 267 (n. 24).

[83] Moulton, *Grammar*, 3:17, 183 (n. 51).

[84] See also Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 56 (n. 52). Wallace, *Syntax*, 257 (n. 24), argues that this interpretation is based on a misunderstanding of Colwell's rule. Schnackenburg, *John I*, 234–35 (n. 20), Schnelle, *Johannes*, 31 (n. 48), and Barrett, *John*, 156 (n. 34), *inter alia*, reject this idea and underline that θεός is the predicate.

[85] N. Windham, *New Testament Greek for Preachers and Teachers: Five Areas of Application* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 180–81, argues that such a view would contextually militate against John 1:1b, since we find a "personal" differentiation between the Word and God there.

4. Qualitative Use

According to Wallace[86] the implication of Colwell's rule for v. 1c is as follows: since only one nominative substantive in 1:1 has an article (grammatical "tag") a subset proposition is envisaged here, which means that the "λόγος" belongs to the larger category known as "θεός." Wallace[87] continues to explain that the force of the construction, most likely, emphasizes the *nature* and not the identity of the Word; therefore, "the most likely candidate for θεός is qualitative."[88] It seems as if the word θεός is used in an adjectival sense.[89] Wallace[90] also points out that, before Colwell's article was published, most commentators saw θεός as qualitative.[91] "That is to say, the Word is true deity but he is not the same *person* as the θεός mentioned earlier in the verse";[92] in other words, the Word was God, but he is distinct from the Father. That the Word becomes flesh (1:14) mirrors the expression in John 1:1c, emphasizing his nature rather than his identity. Wallace[93] maintains that, both grammatically and theologically, this is the better choice. The fact that the Word is not the Father comes out clearly, although they share the same essence. Qualitatively, the Word has all the "attributes and qualities that 'the God' (of 1:1b) had."[94] Possible translations would therefore be: "What God was, the Word was," (NEB) or "the Word was divine" (in which case a qualification is needed, namely that "divine" can be applied *only* to true deity). Even though Wallace is convinced that God in v. 1c is qualitative, he still prefers the translation: "the Word was God," since it creates the fewest possibilities for misunderstanding. This preceding argument just goes to illustrate the difficulty of translating this phrase.

Greenlee[95] expands the argument by noting that proper names of persons and places, as well as divine names and titles (e.g., θεός, ἅγιον πνεῦμα) are definite in themselves; whether they do or do not take the article. However, when θεός or ἅγιον πνεῦμα does have the article, the *person* (i.e.,

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[86] Wallace, *Syntax*, 45–46 (n. 24).

[87] Ibid., 46.

[88] Ibid., 269.

[89] R. Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 147, challenges this view that the noun changes into an adjective, especially in discussion with Moffatt.

[90] Wallace, *Syntax*, 268 (n. 24).

[91] See B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), ad loc., who says, "it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person."

[92] Wallace, *Syntax*, 46 (n. 24).

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 269.

[95] Greenlee, *Grammar*, 21–24, 39 (n. 26).

who he is) is being thought of; and when there is no article, his *nature* (i.e., *what* he is) or his activity is usually being thought of. John 1:1 can therefore be translated as: "the Word was with God (the Father), and the Word was deity (i.e. of the nature of God)." Moule[96] advocated the same position: "It is necessarily without the article inasmuch as it describes the nature of the Word and does not identify His Person. It would be pure Sabellianism to say 'the Word was ὁ θεός.' No idea of inferiority of nature is suggested by the form of expression, which simply affirms the true deity of the Word." Noteworthy is that, although the grammarians mainly opt for interpreting θεός as "divine," this is not the interpretation favoured by theologians and commentators.

In this regard it is interesting to note what Philo remarks in *Somn*. 1.229–230:

> (1.229) What then ought we to say? There is one true God only: but they who are called Gods, by an abuse of language, are numerous; on which account the holy scripture on the present occasion indicates that it is the *true God that is meant by the use of the article*, the expression being, "I am the God (ὁ θεός)"; but when the word is used incorrectly, it is put without the article, the expression being, "He who was seen by thee in the place," not of the God (τοῦ θεοῦ), but simply "of God" (θεοῦ); (1.230) and what he here calls God is his most ancient word, not having any superstitious regard to the position of the names, but only proposing one end to himself, namely, to give a true account of the matter; for in other passages the sacred historian, when he considered whether there really was any name belonging to the living God, showed that he knew that there was none properly belonging to him; but that whatever appellation any one may give him, will be an abuse of terms; for the living God is not of a nature to be described, but only to be.[97] (Italics added).

Based on this remark by Philo, Dunn[98] and Haenchen[99] argue that the use, or absence, of the article is deliberate and would be significant to any Greek reader. Schnelle[100] consequently notes that the article with θεός refers to the one true God: "Bewußt steht in V. 1c das Prädikatsnomen θεός, um so gleichermaßen das göttliche Wesen des Logos und seine Unterschiedenheit vom höchsten Gott auszudrücken." The Word is not identical with God, but also not a second God, "sondern der Logos ist vom Wesen Gottes." In this way, the balance between monotheism and "bitrinitarischer Gestalt" is maintained.[101]

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[96] Moule, *Idiom Book*, 53, 76, 115–16 (n. 45).

[97] *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C. D. Yonge; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 385.

[98] J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 241.

[99] E. Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium: Ein Kommentar* (ed. U. Busse; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 116.

[100] Schnelle, *Johannes*, 31 (n. 48).

[101] See also Keener, *John I*, 373 (n. 42).

5. Theological Considerations

Reference has already been made to the position taken *inter alia* by the Jehovah Witnesses, namely, that the absence of the article indicates that this phrase should be read as "a god." Brown,[102] on the other hand, argues that, due to John's Judaistic background, there is a hesitancy to call Jesus "God," since that term was reserved for God the Father. The divinity of Jesus was normally functionally expressed. Brown[103] then concludes: "In v. 1c the Johannine hymn is bordering on the usage of 'God' for the Son, but by omitting the article it avoids any suggestion of personal identification of the Word with the Father. And for Gentile readers the line also avoids any suggestion that the Word was a second God in any Hellenistic sense."

Wallace[104] states that the translation of the anarthrous θεός as "a god" in John 1:1c is contextually and grammatically highly improbable, and that it militates against the theology of the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel of John does not teach polytheism; rather its arguments are firmly developed within a Jewish monotheistic framework. Jesus is not described as a second God, although his divinity stands above any doubt in this Gospel. Translating this phrase, "and the Word was a god," reflects a dogmatic position, but it does not reflect the theology of John.

6. Idiomatic Use?

Moule[105] considers the possibility of the article in John 1:1c being nothing more than a matter of Greek idiomatic use.

This is also the line Caragounis takes, who feels that the whole issue is unnecessarily problematized, since for a Hellene καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος read idiomatically would have sounded perfectly normal.[106] The primary position of θεός in this phrase rhetorically emphasizes this word. Otherwise it could just as well have read: καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν θεός.

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[102] Brown, *John*, 1:24 (n. 44).

[103] Ibid., 24.

[104] Wallace, *Syntax*, 267 (n. 24).

[105] Moule, *Idiom Book*, 53, 76, 115–16 (n. 45).

[106] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 119–23 (n. 2). He also notes that, since the 19th century C.E., basically no new insight has been formulated. R. Kühner's, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, Part II, Vol. 1 (3d ed.; Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1898), ad loc. on the uses of the article takes into account just about all possible cases in ancient Greek literature; cf. also Jannaris', *Grammar*, 318–25, §§ 1197–1242 (n. 60), for a much briefer discussion, that covers the field adequately and also adds relevant later material.

Caragounis[107] substantiates his position by comparing the Greek and English (or German, Afrikaans, or Dutch for that matter) uses of the article, which should not be confused mutually. Although there are some parallels in the use of the article in Greek and English, there are also some differences that should be noted, for they are important in interpreting v. 1c.

The article has the function of classifying and individualizing substantives, marking substantives as definite and particular. But there are differences between Greek and English, as Caragounis points out.[108] "Man" or "humanity" (without the article) in English refers to man or humanity in general, while in Greek the article will be used to communicate the same. Thus, when a Hellene says ὁ ἄνθρωπος reference is not *per se* to a particular man, but is generic. The article serves to concretize humans as a whole (i.e., humanity). This point should be clearly recognized.

A second significant point Caragounis makes is that the article may be used to refer to a person mentioned before in the context, which gives it a demonstrative rather than a pure articular force (not *the*, but *that*). In the case of the subject being a general concept without specification it is anarthrous. The predicate is usually anarthrous, since no definite person or class is denoted; but property or essence, which is predicated of the subject.[109] However, when the predicate is definite or contextually known, the article is used. This leads Caragounis to conclude that v. 1c is not equivalent to the English "the Word was *a* God."[110] A Hellene would in any case not understand the expression in v. 1c as referring to "*a* god." In the light of the above the predicate would direct understanding to the properties or essence of the Word. Whether the Word was a unique god or one among others is not the issue here, but simply that "The Word was God." The predicate is indeed indefinite in the Greek, though not in the English sense, since the use of the article in Greek and English respectively does not overlap.

Considering the grammatical usage in these phrases, there is little support for regarding the Greek as riddle-like. This leads us to the syntax.

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[107] Caragounis, "The Grammar of John 1:1," 120–21 (n. 2), arguments follow.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., he supplies a convincing example where Greeks would say: Κῦρος ἐγένετο βασιλεὺς τῶν περσῶν, "Cyrus was made king of the Persians." Although Cyrus was the only king of the Persians, a Hellene would use the anarthrous βασιλεύς and not the arthrous ὁ βασιλεύς. This serves as parallel for the use in v. 1c.

[110] Ibid., 121–22.

IV. The Syntactical Dynamics of John 1:1

At first glance, 1:1 is a coordinate construction[111] in which three (independent) phrases are paratactically linked, creating three (independent) statements that should be read together. Since such καί constructions can either be paratactic (coordinate constructions) or hypotactic (subordinate constructions),[112] we mainly have two possibilities: namely, that 1:1 could be interpreted as three independent statements (i.e., the first about time, the next about space, and the third about identity); or, that the three statements should be read interactively, each statement contributing to the whole, but the whole being bigger than the three individual statements. Taking into account the repetitive structure (i.e., the repetition of καί and ἦν, as well as the staircase parallelism[113] that consciously links the one statement with the next) the latter interpretation seems preferable. This reading might also be supported by 1:2, where the first two phrases are indeed combined into a single expression.

This opens up several possible ways in which the construction may be syntactically read as subordinate: i) where the first phrase is expanded on a secondary level by the next two, implying that the emphasis falls on the pre-existence; ii) the third phrase is primary with the other two leading up to the third one in a climactic way; and less probable, iii) where the second phrase is emphasized with the first and last being subordinate.

Taking the above options into account, it is indeed a question whether one single choice should be made, or whether all the options should be taken into account? This would obviously invite the reader to re-read and re-think these phrases and their interrelationship, suggesting that a more refined reading of these phrases is necessary, especially in light of the rest of the Gospel. The meaning is expressed in the fluctuation between the different semantic possibilities given in the Gospel as a whole. This would, of course, strengthen the argument for the riddle-like nature of 1:1, since

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[111] In 1:1 "καί is a coordinate conjunction linking two independent clauses" (Wallace, *Synta*x, 668 [n. 24]).

[112] In paratactical constructions the relationship is loose (three rather independent statements), while hypotactical constructions are more closely linked. The one phrase should be interpreted in terms of, or in close semantic relation to, the other. Wallace (*Syntax*, 667 [n. 24]) formulates it thus: "The coordinate conjunction links equal elements together … The subordinate conjunction links a dependent clause to an independent clause, or another dependent clause, either of which supplies the controlling idea that the subordinate conjunction and its clause modifies."

[113] Brown, *John*, 1:19 (n. 44); Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, 117 (n. 98). See also Bultmann, *Johannes*, 2–3 (n. 20), who describes this structure with reference to the *Odes of Solomon* and Semitic poetry. He refers to "eine kettenartige Verschlingung der Sätze." Schnelle, *Johannes*, 33 (n. 48).

no single or definite choice can be made – the interpretation of the text remains open.

V. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this essay is not to argue for the riddle-like nature of 1:1, or to consider all aspects of such an argument,[114] but to ask whether the grammar and syntax of 1:1 contributes to the overall argument that 1:1 displays a riddle-like nature. The above evidence seems to suggest that, for Hellenes, the grammar did not provide any special challenge and does not warrant the conclusion that this verse should be interpreted as riddle-like. In each case it seems that a plausible "ordinary" understanding of the "grammatical problem" offers itself, which would not have been surprising to a Hellene. In light of the above grammatical evidence, it is not warranted to conclude that there are mysterious or difficult grammatical constructions in 1:1. This does not mean that 1:1 does not have riddle-like qualities, but only that the grammar of 1:1 does not seem to contribute to 1:1 being a riddle. The arguments in favour of riddle-like qualities should be looked for elsewhere; including theological, socio-historical, narrative, and other aspects of the text. The nature of the grammar would also not exclude the possibility of, or argue against, 1:1 being riddle-like; if these other aspects indeed show that to be the case.

The syntactical character of 1:1, with the short conjunctive sentences following in a stair-like parallelism, seems to provide some support for the riddle-like nature of 1:1. The syntax opens up various and interrelated options for understanding the different statements in relation to one another. No final decision on the "correct" reading is really possible, as re-reading and re-thinking in light of the rest of the Gospel seems to be invited.[115] At first reading, one is not supposed to understand fully what is going on, and is left guessing; but, as the Gospel unfolds, the meaning becomes more transparent.

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[114] Dennison, "Symmetries of Equivalence," 29–30, 36 (n. 66), correctly argues that the syntactical, contextual, and theological arguments should together play an important role in determining the translation of v. 1c.

[115] Thatcher, "The Riddles of Jesus in the Johannine Dialogues," 277 (n. 7). The audience who recognizes Jesus as the Logos of the Prologue will also be able to understand the riddles. There is a clear circular effect. The rest of the Gospel is needed to understand 1:1, while 1:1 is needed to understand the rest of the Gospel. As the information in the Gospel merges, the answers to the riddles become more and more evident. Thatcher therefore concludes: "Those not possessing this hermeneutical key, unbelievers, remain locked in the story world of FG [Fourth Gospel], forever unable to understand Jesus' self-revelatory riddles and damned by their ignorance (1:10–12)."

Deciding whether 1:1 has riddle-like qualities thus involves more than just grammar and syntax, but does not exclude grammar and syntax. A comprehensive approach is necessary, in order to reach a responsible conclusion. In this article only the role and contribution of the grammar and syntax were considered.

Several articles in this volume, examining other aspects, contribute further to this more comprehensive understanding.

(Not) Seeing God in the Prologue and Body of John's Gospel

Catrin H. Williams

One of the most distinctive features of the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of John is the claim that he reveals the God who cannot otherwise be seen. Central to the Gospel's christological portrait is the conviction that seeing God is possible through Jesus alone. The basis of this claim and conviction, certainly as presented in the body of the Gospel, is that Jesus, unlike all other emissaries sent by God, has seen the Father (6:46) and, due to his heavenly origins, is the exclusive revealer of God. Following the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry it is announced that, for those who believe, the Father is seen in the Son: "Whoever sees me sees him who sent me" (12:45), an assertion also made by Jesus for the benefit of the disciples in the Farewell Discourse (14:7, 9). The theme of "seeing God," which is afforded a consistently christological focus by the fourth evangelist, also produces a significant point of contact between the Gospel narrative and its opening passage. The prologue is brought to its conclusion with an uncompromising and starkly phrased claim that no one has ever seen God (θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε), which is then followed by the affirmation that God has been revealed in the μονογενὴς θεός – the only-begotten, God – who is close to the Father's heart (1:18).

That v. 18 encapsulates a pivotal theme within the prologue in its present form is suggested by a number of factors. As several commentators have noted, its choice of the designation θεός to express the identity of Jesus as revealer – a reading which enjoys strong textual support[1] – together with the use of the metaphorical expression ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, to describe his intimate relationship with God, form an *inclusio* with the prologue's opening statements about the Logos: καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (1:1c;

[1] μονογενὴς θεός (𝔓[66] א* B C* L) or ὁ μονογενὴς θεός (𝔓[75] א[1] 33). See R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1: *I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 17, 36; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 169; and especially B. A. Mastin, "A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 22 (1975): 37–41.

cf. 1:18b), καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν (1:1b; cf. 1:18c).[2] Furthermore, its crystallization of key christological themes to highlight the uniqueness of the revelation brought by Jesus suggests that v. 18 acts as a strategically placed bridge between the prologue and the main body of the Gospel.[3]

More specifically, John 1:18 closes the prologue section beginning in v. 14, which announces the coming of the Word made flesh "among us" and then elaborates, through a chain of connective statements, on the recognition and confession of the Word by those who "have seen his glory," as attested by the prominence of "we" statements in this part of the prologue (1:14, 16). As indicated by the use of ὅτι at the beginning of v. 17, the two concluding verses of the prologue provide a rationale for the claims that the incarnate Logos manifests God's glory, is full of grace and truth, and dwells among those who receive of his fullness (1:14–16), and do so by emphasizing that Jesus Christ alone – in virtue of his unique identity and relationship with God – has brought the revelation that entails seeing him as the manifestation of God's glory and as the embodiment of his grace and truth.[4]

In this respect, good arguments can be adduced to support the view that 1:17–18 represent the fourth evangelist's own commentary on what formed the original conclusion to an already existing passage or hymn.[5] As well as striking verbal and thematic resemblances between v. 18 and the body of the Gospel – especially the use of μονογενής for Jesus (3:16, 18) and of πατήρ for God – several of its stylistic features suggest that it was the composition of the fourth evangelist. These features, which are listed in one of the

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[2] M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des 4. Evangeliums und zum 1. Johannesbrief* (NTA 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), 207–08; R. A. Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *NTS* 27 (1979): 9–10; H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 106, 108.

[3] U. Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School* (trans. L. M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 224–25: "Verse 18 now emphasizes the uniqueness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, a revelation presently to be unfolded in the Gospel." Cf. also J. Zumstein, "Der Prolog, Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium," in *Der Johannesprolog* (ed. G. Kruck; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 51, 53–54.

[4] This was already recognized by A. von Harnack, "Über das Verhältniß des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZTK* 2 (1892): 214–15. See further O. Hofius, "'Der in des Vaters Schoß ist': Joh 1,18," in *Johannesstudien: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (ed. O. Hofius and H.-C. Kammler; WUNT 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 24 (with reference to v. 18).

[5] See R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Vol. 1 (trans. K. Smyth; New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 276–78; M. Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort: Textlinguistische Studie zum Johannesprolog* (SBS 106; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 95; J. Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (1–12)* (CNT IVa; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2014), 51.

lengthy footnotes provided by Rudolf Bultmann in his commentary,[6] include the following: the use of ἐκεῖνος to take up a preceding subject or object (cf. 1:33; 5:11, 43; 9:37; 10:1), the prefacing of an explanatory clause with a negation that sets out the opposite case (cf. 1:31; 2:25; 3:17; 6:46; 7:22), and, as an addition to Bultmann's list, the lack of an adversative particle where there is evident contrast between two clauses (cf. 2:9, 10). This last feature, together with the use of the designation "Jesus Christ" (cf. 17:3), suggests that v. 17 – like v. 18 – is the work of the fourth evangelist, picking up and reflecting upon the language of χάρις and ἀλήθεια as applied to the incarnate Logos in the earlier part of the prologue. To claim that vv. 17–18 represent an explanatory elaboration of an already existing hymnic passage is not, of course, necessarily incompatible with the view that the prologue was intended, from the outset, as the introduction to the Gospel,[7] even if, as will be argued below, its reflections on "seeing God" do not provide an exact template for what follows in the body of the Gospel.[8]

The close connection forged by the fourth evangelist between v. 18 and its immediate context is further suggested by the high concentration of visual images and related vocabulary appealing to the senses that can be found in this part of the prologue. Both vv. 14 and 18 maintain a clear focus on visuality, on that which has (or has not) been seen: the statement "no one has ever seen (ἑώρακεν) God" (1:18a) certainly recalls the earlier declaration "we have seen (ἐθεασάμεθα) his glory" (1:14c). Even if both statements, but particularly the latter,[9] centres more on the perception and confession of faith than on physical sight,[10] this is not to deny the prologue's emphasis on the *visible* manifestation of God's glory in Jesus' earthly form – that is, in his flesh – and that "seeing," as a result, is presented as a crucial medium for perceiving God's revelation (cf. 11:40;

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[6] R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (18th ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 53–54, n. 5.

[7] See, e.g., M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 105–08.

[8] J. Zumstein, "Intratextuality and Intertextuality in the Gospel of John," in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (ed. T. Thatcher and S. D. Moore; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 123, outlines what he describes as the meta-reflective character of the Johannine prologue: it is not intended as a summary – comprehensive or otherwise – of the Gospel's plot or indeed of its theology, but sets out the hermeneutical framework in which the narrative should be read.

[9] Although θεάομαι can be used to denote physical sight (e.g., John 1:38; 4:35; 6:5), it can also denote seeing with the eyes of faith (cf. 1 John 4:14), which is further suggested, in John 1:14, by its combination with δόξα.

[10] See, e.g., A. T. Lincoln, "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *JSNT* 85 (2002): 7–8. See also Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (1–12)*, 65 (n. 5).

12:41; 17:24).[11] This is further suggested by the special prominence afforded to the visual aspects of the Sinai theophany (Exod 16:10; 24:16–17; 33:18–19, 22; 40:31, 34–35), which has influenced much of what is said about the revelation of the Word incarnate in vv. 14–18.[12] It is the multivalent significance of "seeing" – to convey physical sight as well as spiritual insight – that underpins the various statements in the prologue about the vision of God in the person of Jesus.

Whatever the precise nature of the relationship between the two main parts of v. 18 (a subject to be examined later in this essay), the phrasing of its first clause ("no one has ever seen God") encourages the reader to interpret the central thrust of the second part as stating that God is "seen" in Jesus. This second part, in turn, explicates the earlier claim of the believing community, in v. 14, that they have experienced the theophanic manifestation of Jesus as the embodiment of God's glory on earth. Nevertheless, there are immense difficulties in translating and pinpointing the exact meaning of the two-word declaration about Jesus that concludes v. 18 (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο). While this isolated Johannine occurrence of the verb ἐξηγέομαι is clearly used intransitively without a direct object, most translators and commentators supply the accusative pronoun αὐτόν (cf. NRSV: "who has made *him* known"), although there are some notable exceptions taking a different course of action.[13] Other New Testament occurrences of ἐξηγέομαι are not really comparable to John 1:18, because in all these cases an object is supplied and the verb is used in these settings in the

[11] M. M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 142; see further R. Zimmermann, *Christologie der Bilder im Johannesevangelium* (WUNT 171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 49–59, esp. 55: "Auch das zum Glauben führende geistige Sehen schließt die sinnliche Dimension mit ein, weil gerade das Sichtbarwerden des Logos im Fleisch (Joh 1,14) die Voraussetzung des ganzen Evangeliums ist."

[12] See M. D. Hooker, "John's Prologue and the Messianic Secret," *NTS* 21 (1974): 53–58; A. T. Hanson, "John 1.14–18 and Exodus 34," in his *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1980), 97–109; C. A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup 89; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 79–82.

[13] Note H. Gese, "Der Johannesprolog," in his *Zur biblischen Theologie* (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 169: "Das Fehlen irgendeiner Näherbestimmung, eines Objektes ist durchaus passend, weil so die Absolutheit des Geschehens zum Ausdruck kommt: 'jener offenbarte'." John Ashton remarks that it should not be assumed that an object such as αὐτόν must be supplied, because "this makes it hard to find a rendering that does justice either to the general sense of the Prologue itself or to the body of the Gospel, where Jesus conspicuously refrains from saying anything about God that could be construed as an interpretation or explanation" ("Reflections on a Footnote," in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* [ed. T. Thatcher and C. H. Williams; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 211).

sense of telling or giving an account of facts (Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19). Attention is frequently drawn, in this respect, to the intransitive use of ἐκδιηγέομαι in the question posed about God in Sir 43:31, "Who has seen him and will describe him [or perhaps, more appropriately: and will give an account]?" (τίς ἑόρακεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐκδιηγήσεται;),[14] with some commentators even proposing that John 1:18 provides a direct response to Sira's question.[15] Even more promising, as far as possible parallels and comparisons are concerned, is the use of ἐξηγέομαι in Greek sources to denote the *disclosure* of divine things that are otherwise hidden.[16] These examples provide further support for the view that what is encapsulated right at the end of the prologue is Jesus' role as the one who brings and indeed embodies God's revelation.[17] And although the declaration ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο undoubtedly embraces the verbal dimension of that revelation,[18] it does not exclude the visual aspect of God being "seen" in Jesus.[19]

For the purpose of examining the function of v. 18, both within the prologue and in relation to the body of the Gospel, this essay will now focus on two particular aspects. First, it will compare and contrast the prologue's handling of the dual themes of "seeing God" and Jesus as the focal point of revelation with the evidence attested elsewhere in John's Gospel.

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[14] On the possible affinities between John 1:18 and Sir 43:31, see A. Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium* (WUNT 2/83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 338–39, who notes that, despite the lack of a precise verbal parallel between the two passages, their affinities demonstrate that the conceptual combination of God's invisibility and how to "give an account" of him was already well established in the first century C.E.

[15] See, e.g., F. Büchsel, "ἐξηγέομαι," *TWNT* 2:910; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (ed. A. H. McNeile; 2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 1:30.

[16] See Pollux, *Onomasticon* 8.124: ἐξηγηταὶ δ' ἐκαλοῦντο οἱ τὰ περὶ τῶν δημοσιῶν καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἱερῶν διδάσκοντες ("They were called 'exegetes' who teach the things concerning the signs of the gods and of other holy things"). Cf. Plato, *Republic* 4.427c (the Delphic Apollo is called ἐξηγητής); and 5.469a. Note Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 138 (n. 7): "Immer geht es [in these Greek sources] um Offenbarung oder Aufdeckung verborgener göttlicher Wahrheit."

[17] Cf. I. de La Potterie, *La vérité dans Saint Jean*, Tome 1: *Le Christ et la vérité: L'Esprit et la vérité* (AnBib 73; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977), 228: "il fut, lui, la révélation"; Hofius, "'Der in des Vaters Schoß ist'," 29 (n. 4): "deshalb hat er – und er allein – als der Menschgewordene 'die Offenbarung gebracht'."

[18] Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 57 (n. 6). Cf. also B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 100; Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 207 (n. 2).

[19] See further Zumstein, "Der Prolog," 54 (n. 3): "Durch sein Leben, seine Worte und sein Geschick ist der Sohn der Exeget Gottes für die Menschen." See also E. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNTSup 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 114–15.

Secondly, given the function of v. 18 as the outworking of a thought sequence beginning with the pronouncement that the incarnate Word manifests God's glory (1:14: "we have *seen* his glory"), attention will be given to another passage where the presentation of Jesus in relation to God's glory provides a christological response to the impossibility of seeing God. The text in question, which also occurs at a significant point of transition in the text – this time between the two main halves of the Gospel – is the description of Isaiah as one who "saw his glory and spoke about him" (John 12:41).

I. Who Can See God?

The theme of "seeing God" appears in various parts of the Gospel narrative, invariably to highlight the exclusive revelation of God in Jesus.[20] Commentators regularly identify a cluster of other passages in John's Gospel that bear resemblance to 1:18, although the different emphases and nuances of these passages are often overlooked.[21] Not all of the cited passages share the same set of features as 1:18, with several elements relating closely to the specific contexts in which these passages appear. In fact, an explicit denial of the possibility that God can be seen only occurs on two other occasions, in both of which Jesus is directly challenged by his Jewish interlocutors. On the first occasion, in 5:37, where the Sinai theophany provides the likely scriptural screen or backdrop for the content of the exchange, those addressed are accused of never ([οὐ] πώποτε) having heard God's voice or of having seen God's form (cf. Deut 4:12, 15), which, in the case of the first accusation, amounts to them being deprived of a fundamental aspect of the Jewish understanding of revelation.[22] The demonstration of this is the fact that they do not believe in Jesus, because acceptance of the one sent by God is deemed to be crucial for not only "seeing" but also "hearing" the Father (5:38).[23]

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[20] On the importance of this theme in John's Gospel, see M. M. Thompson, "Jesus: 'The One Who Sees God'," in *Israel's God and Rebecca's Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (ed. D. B. Capes, A. D. DeConick, H. K. Bond, and T. A. Miller; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 215–26, esp. 216–17, 219, 224–25.

[21] J. Rinke, *Kerygma und Autopsie: Der christologische Disput als Spiegel johanneischer Gemeindegeschichte* (HBS 12; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1997), 73, describes 1:18 as a *Leitmotiv* which becomes apparent in 5:37; 6:46; 14:9; 1 John 3:2.

[22] This stands in stark contrast to passages where it is stated that Israel has heard God's voice (cf. Exod 19:9; Deut 4:12, 33, 36; 5:22, 24; Sir 17:13).

[23] Cf. S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill,

Similarly, in John 6 the point is made that one hears and learns from the Father (that is, is "taught by God") by coming to Jesus and believing in him. As noted by Andrew Lincoln: "No one comes to Jesus unless taught by God, but no one truly listens to God except through Jesus."[24] However, in contrast to John 5:37, only the "seeing" of God is denied in this particular context (6:46a: οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα ἑώρακεν; cf. 1:18a), because the text states, albeit indirectly, that it is possible to hear God's voice by listening to and observing the one who really has seen the Father. Though frequently overlooked, 6:46 is in fact the only passage in John's Gospel to state explicitly that the vision of God is restricted to Jesus: "Not that anyone has seen the Father *except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father* (οὗτος ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα)." There are, admittedly, passages in which Jesus refers to what he has heard (John 8:26, 40; 15:15) or seen in the Father's presence (8:38: παρὰ τῷ πατρί; cf. 3:11, 32; 5:19), but none of them actually states that Jesus has seen the Father in the way that this is phrased in 6:46. Where John 6:46 bears resemblance to the final verse of the prologue is in its highlighting of the claim that Jesus alone can reveal the Father because of his unique relationship with God (ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ; cf. 5:19; 8:38).

If Jesus' words to his Jewish interlocutors emphasize their inability to see God and, in the case of 6:46, stress that it is Jesus' exclusive privilege to have seen the Father, it is the possibility of seeing God in Jesus, his authorized representative, that is given unequivocal expression in 12:45: "And whoever sees me sees him who sent me." This is also the thrust of Jesus' words to his disciples in 14:9: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (cf. 14:7). Both of these cases, it can be argued, represent a variation within Jesus' own speech of the prologue's concluding assertion that Jesus brings – even brings out – revelation (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο), because, as indicated by the use of the aorist (ἐξηγήσατο), God is seen in the earthly Jesus.[25]

A number of the motifs encountered in these passages (5:37; 6:46; 12:45; 14:9) could be described as compatible with, and may even closely resemble, some of the assertions made in the final verse of the prologue. However, what is absent from v. 18 is a statement to the effect that *Jesus himself has seen God*.[26] Very few scholars have noticed its absence, and

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1975), 230; A. T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), 206–07.

[24] Ibid., 231.

[25] Cf. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 261 (n. 2).

[26] Very few scholars betray awareness of this fact. Exceptions are Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 93–94 (n. 19); Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 206, n. 34 (n. 23); Ashton, "Reflections on a Footnote," 209 (n. 13); idem, *The Gospel of John and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 167–68.

even fewer have made anything of it. While it seems clear that v. 18 contains some kind of antithesis – and this despite the lack of a connective δέ between its two main parts[27] – does the second part, as many appear to assume,[28] make the following implicit claim: no one has ever seen God, but Jesus – the μονογενὴς θεός – has seen God, which is why he is able to bring revelation? Furthermore, has he seen God in virtue of his presence "close to the Father's heart"? One could perhaps respond by suggesting that the notion of Jesus seeing God is presupposed but not stated in this verse, because the fourth evangelist's strategy is to telescope as many key motifs as possible into what is still a lengthy two-part statement. However, if this is what is intended, it would only involve modifying the text to include a few additional words such as εἰ μή between the two main parts of v. 18.[29]

In a recently published essay, John Ashton has proposed that the final verse of the prologue categorically denies that *anyone* has seen God (including Jesus) and that, in this respect, v. 18 is contradicted by John 6:46, the one place where Jesus' vision of God is explicitly stated, because v. 18 does not allow for any exceptions. The prologue, claims Ashton, is anti-apocalyptic in that its emphasis lies on Jesus as the embodiment of revelation.[30] "God's plan for the world (the Logos) is not revealed by a visionary seer who has seen God and is consequently in a position to pass on his knowledge to others. Rather it takes the form of a theophany ('we have gazed on his glory'), a form of God's communication with the world found very often in the Bible."[31] Thus, Ashton's explanation of this difference between 1:18 and 6:46 is that, in the second edition of the Gospel, which, he claims, is when both the prologue and John 6 were added to the text, the fourth evangelist decided to modify 6:46 by allowing that the one who is from God *can* be said to have seen God.

While I agree that John 1:18 contains no hint of the presentation of Jesus as "one who sees God," it should be noted that it serves a different function from 6:46, where Jesus' ability to see God is presented as part of his self-legitimation in confrontation with his Jewish opponents. In par-

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[27] C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:422, notes the lack of an adversative particle in other cases of evident contrast (John 2:9, 10; 7:36).

[28] Cf. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:36 (n. 1); C. Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (ZBK 4; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2001), 1.33; Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 112 (n. 11); J. Beutler, "Der Johannes-Prolog – Ouvertüre des Johannesevangeliums," in *Der Johannesprolog* (ed. G. Kruck; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009), 98.

[29] See Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 206, n. 34 (n. 23): "Jn does not continue: εἰ μὴ ὁ μονογενὴς θεὸς καὶ ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο."

[30] Ashton, "Reflections on a Footnote," 209–11 (n. 13).

[31] Ibid., 210.

ticular, the last verse of the prologue acts as the gathering together, or outworking, of the section beginning in v. 14. The fourth evangelist is not so much interested at this point in whether Jesus has seen God, in representing him as the seer who has been sent by God (cf. 5:37; 6:44; 12:44–45), but in his unique identity as the μονογενὴς θεός, the one whom *others see* and recognize as the incarnation of God's Word, as the manifestation of God's glory, grace and truth. The emphasis in 1:14–18, therefore, is on what Jesus reveals in his capacity as the incarnate Logos, on what he makes available to those who "see" him. This does not involve glossing over the declaration about the intimate contact between the Father and the Son (1:18b: ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός), because it serves to provide a rationale for the claim that Jesus embodies God's revelation (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο) rather than to indicate that Jesus has indeed seen the Father.

The unequivocal nature of the initial statement in 1:18 – "no one has ever seen God" – suggests that it forms a response to claims that some chosen individuals have indeed seen God, either in theophanies or through visionary experiences (a topic to which I will return), but the response is such that it overtly, and retrospectively, sets Jesus in a completely different category from all other possible contenders.[32] In other words, v. 18 stresses that God is now seen in and through Jesus, for, as Brian Mastin succinctly remarks in his article on θεός christology in John's Gospel, what the evangelist insists in v. 18 is that "only God can reveal God."[33] It is possible, of course, that if the evangelist were to be pressed as to whether v. 18 takes for granted that Jesus has seen God, he may well have given an affirmative answer, but this was not his aim in the final part of the prologue.

II. Moses and "Seeing God"

To propose that the initial assertion in v. 18 ("no one has ever seen God") reacts to claims made by, or attributed to, other possible contenders raises the issue of the role played by Moses, particularly if the evangelist is pursuing a train of thought that was initiated in v. 14 and is followed

[32] See C. S. Keener, "'We Beheld His Glory!' (John 1:14)," in *John, Jesus, and History*, Vol. 2: *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. P. N. Anderson, F. Just and T. Thatcher; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 20, who interprets 1:14–18 as drawing out a "multifaceted parallel" between Moses' vision of God's glory on Sinai and the disciples' vision of God's glory in the enfleshed Logos.

[33] See Mastin, "A Neglected Feature," 41 (n. 1). Cf. also Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St John*, 108 (n. 23); idem, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 232.

through to vv. 17–18.[34] Therefore, despite the lack of a connective between these last two verses, the stance taken on "seeing God" picks up the "comparison and contrast,"[35] in v. 17, between Moses as the mediator of God's gift of the law and Jesus as the source of grace and truth (cf. Exod 34:6).[36] That the contrast between Moses and Jesus continues into v. 18 is suggested by the structural symmetry of this pair of verses: the law, on the one hand, may have been given (ἐδόθη) through Moses, but this did not bring about a direct vision of God; grace and truth, on the other hand, have come (ἐγένετο) through Jesus Christ because he is the definitive revelation of God.[37] Like elsewhere in vv. 14–18, scriptural language associated with the Sinai theophany contributes to the wording of the assertion that "no one has ever seen God," here recalling the rejection of Moses' request to see God's face, on the grounds that "no one shall see me and live" (Exod 33:20; cf. 19:21; Judg 13:22; 1 Kgs 19:11–13; Isa 6:5).[38] Consequently, despite Moses' reputation in biblical traditions as one who knew or spoke with God "face to face" (Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10; cf. Num 12:8; Sir 45:3), as one who enjoyed a privileged position in contrast with the more limited visual access afforded to other Israelites, the overall assessment of Moses that underpins John 1:18a is that even he was denied a direct vision of God, probably because of its catastrophic consequences,[39] and that he was shielded from seeing God's face while his glory was passing by (Exod 33:21–23). Thus, regardless of the wide spectrum of traditions in the Hebrew

[34] Verses 16–17 are connected to vv. 14–15 by ὅτι (1:16a) and are also linked together by ὅτι (1:17a). Furthermore, πλήρωμα (1:16a) harks back to πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας (1:14e), which appears again in 1:17b (ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια). See further Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 199, 206–07, 258 (n. 2), who describes vv. 14–18 as a "geschichtete *Zeugnisrede*" (p. 199).

[35] T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (SBT 40; London: SCM, 1963), 24, 26.

[36] Cf. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 1:272 (n. 5): although ἔλεος is usually employed by the Septuagint to translate חסד, χάρις becomes more prominent in later texts (Esth 2:9; Sir 7:33; 40:17; cf. Symmachus 2 Sam 2:6; 10:2). See also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 82, 175–76; Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 130 (n. 7): not through the Septuagint but rather a different – and now unknown – translation of the Hebrew rendering of Exod 34:6 into Greek.

[37] Hofius, "'Der in des Vaters Schoß ist'," 30, n. 44 (n. 4), notes that both v. 17 and v. 18 contain an antithetical parallelism; therefore there is a correspondence between v. 17a and v. 18a and between v. 17b and v. 18b.

[38] This is the view expressed by the majority of scholars. Cf. P. Borgen, "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. J. Ashton; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 90; Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, 68 (n. 35); Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1:33 (n. 28).

[39] For the interest in biblical traditions on the notion that seeing God *will lead to death*, rather than on his invisibility, see B. D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–4.

Bible relating to the theme of the "invisibility and palpable presence" of God,[40] the fourth evangelist – in a way that resembles other strands of Jewish tradition about Moses[41] – focuses, at least initially in v. 18, on the veiled character of God's revelation in the past.

There is, in this respect, little textual evidence to support the proposal that the argument at the end of the prologue runs as follows: although no one, including Moses, has seen God (the Father), the Sinai revelation involved Moses' encounter with the pre-existent Word – a revelation of the grace and truth highlighted in v. 17.[42] The wider context in vv. 14–18 suggests that what is in view is the revelation of the *incarnate* Word, with the structure and wording of v. 17 pointing to the grace and truth that was previously associated with the Law and the glory of YHWH (Exod 34:6)[43] as having now come into being through Jesus Christ.[44] It may possibly be implied that the Law bears witness on behalf of *Jesus* as the personification of grace and truth,[45] but nothing is said – either here or elsewhere in the Gospel narrative – to indicate that Moses has seen the glory of the pre-

[40] G. Savran, "Seeing is Believing: On the Relative Priority of Visual and Verbal Perception of the Divine," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 320–61, here 322 (although see n. 39 above with regard to the notion of the *invisibility* of God). See further Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John*, 110 (n. 11).

[41] See Philo, *Post.* 168–69: "Not even to Moses did God reveal himself" (with reference to Exod 33:23); cf. *Abr.* 76; *Spec.* 1.36–50; *Mut.* 9. For recent discussion of Philo's views about the *visio Dei*, see S. D. Mackie, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: The Logos, the Powers, or the Existent One?," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 21 (2009): 25–47; idem, "Seeing God in Philo of Alexandria: Means, Methods, and Mysticism," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 147–79.

[42] See Hanson, "John 1.14–18," 103–04 (n. 12); idem, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 21–24; cf. W. Carter, "The Prologue and John's Gospel: Function, Symbol and the Definitive Word," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 46–47; M. Labahn, "Jesus und die Autorität der Schrift im Johannesevangelium – Überlegungen zu einem spannungsreichen Verhältnis," in *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im Johannesevangelium: Festgabe für Johannes Beutler SJ zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Labahn, K. Scholtissek, and A. Strotmann; Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 191.

[43] Similarly, it is implied in John 5:37 (cf. 5:39, 45–46) and 6:46 that divine revelation is no longer connected with Israel's past (including the gift of the Law) but with the present experience of Jesus.

[44] See further Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 539, 541 (n. 23); Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 224 (n. 3). See also J. Lieu, "Narrative Analysis and Scripture in John," in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (ed. S. Moyise; JSNTSup 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 147: "The preceding promise of 'grace in place of grace' could be taken to give Law the value of 'grace,' but this is qualified by the explicit sourcing of 'grace and truth' in Jesus Christ, whom the reader will identify with the 'only begotten, full of grace and truth' in verse 14."

[45] The purpose of the Law as God's gift is explicated within the Gospel narrative, where it is presented as a witness leading people to the "truth" in Jesus (see John 1:45; 5:39, 45–47; 7:19, 23).

existent Word. The emphasis rather is upon the contrast between Moses (and others), who experienced only a partial revelation of God, and the community of Johannine believers who, represented by "we" (1:14, 16), have seen God in his incarnate Word (cf. 14:9).

The final lines of the prologue thus clearly tap into the extensive debate on the impossibility of seeing God, one that is not limited to the biblical sources, but extends into many Jewish traditions of the late Second Temple period and beyond.[46] This debate finds varied expression in the Jewish apocalypses, where responses to possible visions of the terrifying and indescribable face of God can take the form of rejection,[47] reticence,[48] or, in some cases, more limited restraint.[49] And yet, in various Jewish apocalyptic and early mystical circles the tradition endured that Moses' ascent of Sinai was none other than an ascent to heaven to receive knowledge of the divine mysteries and a direct vision of God.[50] There is evidence elsewhere in John's Gospel of the deliberate refutation of such claims to heavenly ascents and visions (e.g., John 3:13: "no one [οὐδείς] has ascended to heaven") – refutations whose structural resemblance to the emphatic "no one (οὐδείς) has seen God" may provide additional support that Jewish claims about the visionary experiences of Moses are also in view, and rejected, in v. 18.

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[46] In addition to the sources noted in n. 41 above, see Josephus, *B.J.* 7.346: ἀόρατος … τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνοις ὄμμασιν. For later rabbinic evidence, see *b. Ber.* 7b; *Sifre on Numbers* § 103 on Num 12:8; *Sifre on Deuteronomy* § 357 (19); *Exod. Rab.* 23:15; *Lev. Rab.* 4:8: "He who sees and is not seen …" On the hiddenness of God in Graeco-Roman sources, see R. Bultmann, "Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium," *ZNW* 29 (1930): 169–75; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:423 (n. 27).

[47] See especially *ApocAbr* 19:4: The seer encounters the angels and the fiery throne in the seventh heaven, but God, "the invisible glory," remains hidden from human view.

[48] Other apocalypses do include visions of God, but choose to elaborate on what surrounds, rather than the precise contours of, the divine *kavod*. *1 Enoch* 14, the earliest such vision, speaks of the enthroned "Great Glory" whose luminous garment is surrounded by blazing fire (14:20), and then adds that no angel is able to come and look at his face and that no flesh can see him (14:21).

[49] A more explicitly anthropomorphic description of God's appearance occurs in *2 Enoch*, where the seer declares that he has seen the face of the Lord "like iron made burning hot by a fire" (22:1) and has even gazed into his eyes (39:4), but that there is no way of communicating the indescribable face of God (22:2) and that to stand before the face of the divine King is both terrifying and dangerous (39:8).

[50] Philo, *Mos.* 1.158; *Quaest. Exod.* 2.29, 40, 46; Josephus, *A. J.* 3.88, 96; 4.8, 49; *LAB* 12:1; *2 Bar* 4:1–7; 59:3; *4 Ezra* 14:3–6. W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 156–59, 205–09; Carter, "The Prologue and John's Gospel," 44, 46, 56 (n. 42).

III. Isaiah and "Seeing the Glory"

Moses is not the only prominent individual from biblical tradition to feature in Jewish speculation about a direct vision of God. Another such figure is the prophet Isaiah. However, in comparison with Moses, there are fewer references in Jewish and early Christian tradition to Isaiah's heavenly ascents and visionary encounters with God, certainly those that can be confidently dated to the first century C.E. or earlier. Notwithstanding the fact that the Johannine prologue contains no explicit references to Isaiah or any clear allusions to his prophecies, he warrants consideration in a treatment of the theme of "seeing God" in the prologue and body of John's Gospel, and this for two reasons.

First, after providing a summary assessment of Jesus' public ministry with the aid of two quotations from the prophecies of Isaiah (John 12:38–40; cf. Isa 53:1; 6:10), the fourth evangelist includes the remark that "Isaiah saw his glory and spoke about him" (12:41: ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἠσαΐας ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλησεν περὶ αὐτοῦ). This explanatory comment is undoubtedly the consequence of the assertion made elsewhere in the Gospel that Jesus is the exclusive revealer of God. It is a comment that gives due regard to the prohibition in Exod 33:20, and indeed to the statement in John 1:18a that no one has ever seen God, and it does so by claiming that the enthroned figure whose glory is said to have been seen by Isaiah was none other than Jesus. Despite the fact that he is not specifically named at this point, the phrase εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ must refer to Isaiah's vision of the glory of *Jesus* because he is consistently the referent of all the other occurrences of the pronoun αὐτός in the surrounding narrative comments: "they did not believe in him (εἰς αὐτόν)" (12:37) and "many, even of the authorities, believed in him (εἰς αὐτόν)" (12:42). Given, moreover, that John 12:37–40 presents Isaiah's words as being fulfilled in Jesus – hence the remark that "he spoke about him" (12:41) – the fact that the words "he saw his glory" immediately precede this comment, with no indication that αὐτός has a different referent, offers further support that the figure in question is Jesus. He appears to Isaiah and converses with the prophet, declaring that God ("he" to which reference is made in the opening lines of the quotation from Isa 6:10) has caused the spiritual blindness and hardness of heart of those who cannot be healed by Jesus.[51] Thus, whereas Jesus (alone) has seen God (cf. John 6:46), Isaiah – like Jesus' disciples (14:9; cf. 12:45) – has been privileged to experience the revelation of God in Jesus. Indeed,

[51] This accounts for the shift from "he" (God) to "I" (Jesus – ἰάσομαι) in the final line of the Isaianic quotation. On the textual form and function of the quotation of Isa 6:10 in John 12:40, see especially M. J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (CBET 15; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 99–122.

while the prologue's concluding declarations offer an explication of the confession of those who have witnessed Jesus as the unique manifestation of God's glory in human form ("we have seen his glory"), this confession finds its closest Johannine counterpart in the claim that Isaiah "saw his glory" (12:41).

Secondly, an investigation of Jewish and early Christian perceptions of Isaiah and his temple vision indicate that the prophet played a key role in the widespread debate about the possibility of seeing God. The fourth evangelist may include no more than veiled references to Exod 33:20 ("no one shall see me [God] and live") and Isa 6:1 ("I saw the Lord") (cf. 1:18; 6:46; 12:41), but, as I have argued elsewhere,[52] several Jewish and early Christian traditions bring these two scriptural passages and, more importantly, the characters themselves into direct conversation with one another (e.g., *Ascen. Isa.* 3:8–10).[53] In particular, attempts are made in later talmudic tradition to solve the possible contradiction between the two passages: prophets like Isaiah thought they had seen God (because they looked through an unclear glass), while Moses, who had the greater authority, possessed the insight ("clear glass") that enabled him to recognize that a visible encounter with God was impossible (*b. Yebam.* 49b). This and similar attempts to reconcile Moses and Isaiah on the subject of "seeing God" points to the significant role played by Isaiah's call-vision in such debates, particularly in view of the fact that his declaration, "I saw the Lord" (Isa 6:1), amounts to one of the most unequivocal claims to have seen God in the Hebrew Bible.

It is widely acknowledged that the prophet's vision of "the Lord" seated upon a throne (Isa 6:1–13), which forms the broader context of the immediately preceding quotation from Isa 6:10 used to explain the lack of belief in Jesus, provides the *setting* for the Johannine comment that Isaiah "saw (aorist: εἶδεν) his glory." Features in both the Hebrew text and later Jewish interpretative renderings of Isa 6 support the view that the reference to δόξα in John 12:41 is drawn specifically from Isaiah's call-vision. The Hebrew text of Isa 6:1 gives expression to the prophet's vision of God by stating that Isaiah saw the Lord (אדני), followed by Isaiah's own declaration, "My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (6:5). Nevertheless, it could be inferred from the intervening context in the Hebrew that what Isaiah sees amounts to a vision of the glory of the Lord, because the

[52] C. H. Williams, "Seeing the Glory: The Reception of Isaiah's Call-Vision in Jn 12.41," in *Judaism, Jewish Identities and the Gospel Tradition: Festschrift for Professor Maurice Casey* (ed. J. Crossley; London: Equinox, 2010), 192–94.

[53] *Ascen. Isa.* 3:8–10: "And Isaiah himself has said, 'I see more than Moses the prophet'. Moses said, 'There is no man who can see the Lord and live.' But Isaiah has said, 'I have seen the Lord, and behold I am alive.' Know, therefore, O king, that they are false prophets."

seraphim announce that "the whole earth is full of his glory" (6:3). And while the translator(s) of LXX Isaiah adjust the text so that it is God's glory (δόξα) – rather than the hem of his robe – that fills the temple (6:1), the *Targum of Isaiah* even modifies Isaiah's initial assertion that he saw "the Lord" so that the prophet in fact sees "the glory (יקרא) of the Lord resting upon a throne." The reference to Isaiah having seen the King with his eyes (6:5 HT, LXX) now becomes a more indirect vision of "the glory of the Shekhinah of the eternal King, the Lord of hosts" (*Tg. Isa.* 6:5).[54] What becomes evident, therefore, is that these targumic renderings display an acute awareness of the problem posed by the apparent dissonance between the assertion that no one can see God and the claim made by individuals like Isaiah that they have "seen the Lord." The reference to δόξα in John 12:41 may share the targumic emphasis upon "Glory" as the means of God's *visible* manifestation, but its own solution to the anthropomorphic features of the Hebrew text and, in part, the LXX version of Isaiah's call-vision is to identify Jesus as the human-like Glory seen by the prophet.

Pinpointing the event that provides the setting for Isaiah's vision of glory is clearly not the primary purpose of the clarificatory aside in John 12:41, but rather explaining how Isaiah's visionary experience and his resulting words can be interpreted with reference to Jesus.[55] The conciseness of the comment, ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, has prompted much debate as to how the prophet could be regarded as having seen Jesus' glory during his temple vision. The widely accepted view that Isaiah is understood to have seen the glory of the pre-existent Jesus undoubtedly agrees with christological statements made elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24), but no firm distinction between Jesus' pre-existent and incarnate δόξα is intended, in all likelihood, by the remark that "he saw his glory."[56] In fact, there are several textual indicators that the comment focuses heavily, if not primarily, on the notion that Isaiah "saw" the manifestation of divine glory in Jesus' earthly life.

First, given that John 12:41 operates as an explanatory aside in a narrative unit that forms the conclusion to the first major section of the Gospel and which reflects on the negative response to Jesus' public ministry (12:37–43), the function of v. 41 within this unit becomes more evident if

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[54] On the affinities between John 12:41 and the targumic renderings of Isa 6:1–5, see, e.g., Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:486–87 (n. 1); Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John*, 432 (n. 1); Evans, *Word and Glory*, 162–63 (n. 12).

[55] The textual variant ὅτε (D ϕ 565 VetLat Vg sy) focuses on the occasion of Isaiah's temple vision, whereas the more difficult ὅτι ($\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ א A B) also point to its consequences.

[56] See also N. A. Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. John Ashton; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 154–55.

attention is paid to the structure of John 12:37–43.[57] The first part, 12:37–41, is bound together by its three overt references to the prophet Isaiah. On the third occasion (12:41a) the evangelist elaborates upon the earlier two references to the words of Isaiah (12:38, 39) in order to introduce his christological assessment of those words (12:41bc). The clause "Isaiah said these things" (ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἠσαΐας) does not, in this respect, refer solely to the immediately preceding quotation from Isa 6:10, but draws together and reflects on both quotations.[58] Thus, Isaiah's prophetic testimony (Isa 53:1; 6:10) results from his vision of Jesus as the embodiment of God's glory, a vision that also embraces Jesus' future glory. This is what enabled Isaiah to speak as he did about Jesus' mission in the world (12:41b: "he saw his glory") and to predict the unbelief that he would encounter during his earthly life (12:41c: "and he spoke about him").[59]

Secondly, and closely related to the first point, that what is seen by Isaiah need not be restricted to Jesus' pre-existent glory is further suggested by the deliberate juxtaposition of two quotations from Isaiah (53:1; 6:10) in John 12:37–40(41). As has been noted by some scholars, this juxtaposition prompts the identification of several distinctive verbal and thematic links between the wider contexts of these quotations, both in the opening verses of Isaiah's call-vision (6:1–13) and in the introduction to the fourth Servant Song (52:13–53:12).[60] With regard to the Hebrew text, the most remarkable verbal connection between the two passages is the use of the words "high and lifted up" to describe the divine throne in the temple (Isa 6:1: רם ונשׂא) and the future exaltation and lifting up of the Servant (52:13: ירום

[57] See further R. Kühschelm, *Verstockung, Gericht und Heil: Exegetische und bibeltheologische Untersuchung zum sogenannten "Dualismus" und "Determinismus" in Joh 12,35–50* (BBB 76; Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1990), 45.

[58] Although ταῦτα can be used in John's Gospel to refer to an earlier single statement (e.g., 9:22, 40), it is more commonly used to denote a series of preceding statements (e.g., 6:59; 8:30; 12:16; 13:21; 14:25).

[59] This also aligns the presentation of Isaiah in John 12:37–41 with the Jewish understanding of his role as a visionary prophet who can see the future. Particularly relevant in this respect is the description of Isaiah in Sira 48:24–25: "By a spirit of strength he saw the future (חזה אחרית; εἶδεν τὰ ἔσχατα), and comforted the mourners of Zion. He declared what shall be (נהיות; τὰ ἐσόμενα) until eternity, and hidden things (נסתרות; τὰ ἀπόκρυφα) before they come to pass." The final clause in particular points to Isaiah as the prophet who was privileged to see and to disclose divine secrets (cf. 3:22; 42:19). On this passage, see further Williams, "Seeing the Glory," 191–92 (n. 52).

[60] See especially C. A. Evans, "Obduracy and the Lord's Servant: Some Observations on the Use of the Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee* (ed. C. A. Evans and W. F. Stinespring; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 230–32; R. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 49–51; J. Frey, "'… dass sie meine Herrlichkeit schauen' (Joh 17.24): Zu Hintergrund, Sinn und Funktion der johanneischen Rede von der δόξα Jesu," *NTS* 54 (2008): 375–97, here 385–86.

וְנִשָּׂא). Furthermore, in LXX Isaiah Isaiah sees the "glory" (δόξα) that fills the temple (6:1 LXX) and speaks of the glorification (δοξασθήσεται) of the Servant (52:13 LXX).[61] Of particular significance for this essay is the fact that both Isaianic passages contain strong visual emphasis, and one of their most striking connections is the link between Isaiah "seeing" the Lord (6:1, 5 LXX: εἶδον; cf. 6:9–10 LXX) and the "seeing" of the glorification of the Servant (52:13 LXX: ἰδού, cf. 52:15 LXX: many nations and kings will see [ὄψονται] the Servant).[62] If John 12:41, as seems likely, acts as a commentary on both Isaiah quotations (ταῦτα), two "events" or "acts" of seeing are subsumed under the single reference to glory, namely, Isaiah's vision of Jesus as the glorious figure in the temple, which the fourth evangelist then views as the occasion for the prophet having seen, ahead of time, the glory manifested by Jesus during his earthly life,[63] and whose rejection ultimately leads to his enthronement and glorification on the cross.[64]

Further support for this interpretation of John 12:41 is afforded by the earlier description of Abraham as a witness to Jesus: "Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad (καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐχάρη)" (John 8:56). There is striking resemblance between the structure of the final clause about Abraham and the remark about Isaiah (ὅτι εἶδεν … καὶ ἐλάλησεν), and a similar interpretative pattern also emerges in that the use of the aorist εἶδεν to denote Abraham's and Isaiah's acts of "seeing" points to a specific event as the narrative-historical context for their respective "visions." In the case of Abraham, the most likely setting is the so-called covenant of the pieces (Gen 15), which, according to several Jewish traditions, becomes the occasion for the patriarch to receive visions of the future and of the end times.[65] Admittedly, some of the Jewish traditions relating to Genesis 15 state that Abraham, during this event,

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[61] See N. Chibici-Revneanu, *Die Herrlichkeit des Verherrlichten: Das Verständnis der* δόξα *im Johannesevangelium* (WUNT 2/231; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 196–98.

[62] On the importance of visuality in the text and reception of Isa 52:13–53:12, see, most recently, J. M. F. Heath, *Paul's Visual Piety: The Metamorphosis of the Beholder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 228–31. On the importance of "seeing" in Isa 52:13–15 LXX, see E. R. Ekblad Jr., *Isaiah's Servant Poems according to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (CBET 23; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 192–93, 204.

[63] Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel*, 119, n. 77 (n. 51), points to another reason for the possible merging together of the pre-existent and earthly δόξα of Jesus in John 12:41: it accords with the Jewish apocalyptic notion that things to be revealed at the end times already exist in heaven with God.

[64] Cf. Frey, "'… dass sie meine Herrlichkeit schauen'," 386 (n. 60).

[65] According to *4 Ezra* 3:14, Ezra says to the Most High on this occasion: "To him [Abraham] only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night," and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the patriarch is told, during his tour of heaven, that he is seeing "what will be, and everything that will be in the last days" (24:2; cf. 9:10; 29:2; 31:1–2; *Gen. Rab.* 44:21, 22).

sees the hidden things that already exist in heaven (*2 Bar.* 4:3–4; *Apoc. Ab.* 9:6; 12:10; *LAB* 23:6), which could, from a Johannine perspective, have been interpreted as a vision of the pre-existent Jesus (cf. John 8:58). However, because the emphasis in John 8:56 is upon Abraham as having seen Jesus' "day," it must point to a vision of the future whereby Abraham "sees" the earthly mission of the Son.

With regard to John 12:41, interpreting its three-clause commentary as the component that brings together the first, closely intertwined, part of the passage (12:37–41) also brings to light other aspects of its function within the text. In particular, a close link can be identified between the comment that Isaiah "*saw* his glory" and the reflections in the preceding verses, which are underpinned by Isaiah's words (53:1; 6:10) about the relationship between signs and faith, blindness and unbelief (12:37–40). These reflections highlight the signs as the one aspect of Jesus' ministry that should have led to faith (12:37) and should have been perceived as a revelation (ἀπεκαλύφθη) of "the arm of the Lord" (12:38). In other words, to emphasize that Isaiah "saw" Jesus' glory is not only the consequence of the Johannine conviction that Jesus alone has seen God and can reveal him, but points to the attribution of a significant role to Isaiah in his capacity as a visionary prophet. The wider context of John 12:41 makes clear that, although a sensory experience of the signs could bring about an adequate response in faith, people's inability to believe in Jesus is because the signs have not been "seen" with real insight, due to the blinding of their eyes and the hardening of their heart (12:39–40).[66] Because the signs serve as a vehicle for the disclosure of Jesus' glory, a contrast is established between Isaiah, who truly "saw" the glory of Jesus, and those who, despite seeing the signs (with their eyes) lacked the capacity to do so at a deeper level (12:37–38).[67] Jesus' identity as the incarnate δόξα thus remains hidden from those who cannot see, but, according to the evangelist, Isaiah the prophet possessed the kind of sight, not only physical but spiritual sight, that enabled him to recognize Jesus' true significance as the one in whom God is seen. This understanding of "vision" in terms of spiritual perception or discovery does not necessarily point to a particular aspect of Jesus' glory as having been seen by Isaiah. That it embraces his identity and activity in the flesh is, however, strongly implied by the contrasting of Isaiah's vision of Jesus' glory with the people's inability to "see" him during his ministry. The visionary language of Isaiah's call is therefore turned on its head and takes on new meaning, for, in view of the denials expressed elsewhere in

[66] This explains the omission of the two lines referring to ears and hearing from the quotation of Isa 6:10 in John 12:40.

[67] Cf. P. van Boxel, "Die präexistente Doxa Jesu im Johannesevangelium," *Bijdr* 34 (1973): 268–81, here 272–73; Kühschelm, *Verstockung, Gericht und Heil*, 202 (n. 57).

the Gospel, the evangelist asserts that it is a true "seeing" of the earthly Jesus, not heavenly ascents or visions, that is required in order to experience a true "vision" of God's glory.

The emphasis in John 12:41 is on what the prophet Isaiah saw. The *vocabulary* of "seeing" may be supplied by the two Isaiah quotations and the language of "glory" by statements in the wider context of both passages, but the *impetus* for the evangelist's understanding of Isaiah as having seen Jesus' glory is his capacity, and indeed his reputation, to be able to see what, for others, remains concealed: he gains access to the otherwise hidden God as a result of his vision of Jesus as the embodiment of God's glory. For the fourth evangelist, the vision of glory experienced by Isaiah in the temple is not confined to the glory belonging to Jesus before his appearance in the flesh: Isaiah sees in advance that God's glory is embodied and manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, set within the broader framework of the Gospel, and as emphasized in the final verses of the prologue (especially in v. 18: ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο), it becomes evident that, as far as visible revelation is concerned, the fourth evangelist's primary interest lies in the significance of Jesus' *earthly* life and mission. It is to this, he claims, that Isaiah – like Abraham – has borne witness.

IV. Concluding Reflections

This essay has examined some of the ways in which John's Gospel presents the vision of God as concentrated in Jesus. This theme is given its most programmatic expression in the concluding part of the prologue: as μονογενὴς θεός Jesus is the earthly expression of God's revelation (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο) or, as phrased a few verses earlier, he is the visible manifestation of God's glory. In contrast, therefore, to certain declarations found within the body of the Gospel (e.g., John 6:46), the emphasis in the prologue is not upon Jesus himself as the one who sees God but upon his capacity to enable others to do so through him. Among those who have experienced this vision of God are believers who confess that they have "seen his glory" (1:14), but also the prophet Isaiah, whose vision of Jesus as the embodiment of the divine glory provides a significant template for those with eyes to "see God." For the evangelist, then, the proper way to behold Jesus' earthly form is to see it as the locus of God's glory – the glory that Isaiah saw ahead of time.

And where does this leave Moses? The approach adopted in this essay has, inevitably, led to the highlighting of differences, rather than similarities, between his presentation and that of Isaiah, certainly as far as the Gospel's treatment of the theme of "seeing God" is concerned. Of course, the juxtaposition of the Johannine presentation of Moses and Isaiah, which this essay

has encouraged, can lead to the filling of the text's "open spaces" in a way that the fourth evangelist never anticipated or even perhaps intended. As one who "saw his glory," Isaiah may be counted as a paradigmatic witness to be claimed by the Johannine side, and great value is placed on his testimony in order to frame the narrative of Jesus' ministry (1:23; 12:37–40). Having said that, the reader is never told whether Moses similarly saw Jesus' glory or,[68] as in the case of Abraham, rejoiced greatly upon seeing his "day" (8:56). What cannot be denied is that the Johannine appeal to Moses as a reliable witness is more muted and more restrained (1:45; 5:45–46; cf. 3:14) than the appeal to the prophet Isaiah. This may be due to Moses' ascribed role, in both the prologue and the body of the Gospel, as the subject of competing claims to revelation that fail to place Jesus at the centre of such claims. Consequently, the fourth evangelist's comparison of Moses and Jesus largely focuses on Moses' role as the giver of the Law (1:17; 7:19, 22–23; cf. 9:28–29), which offers testimony to Jesus but, at the same time, is stripped of its significance as the locus of God's revelation (cf. 9:28). Nevertheless, in his capacity as "the one who sees," Isaiah is aligned with those who recognize Jesus as the visible manifestation of God. To that extent, at least, these two significant figures from Israel's past are allowed to stand quite far apart.

[68] Although this silence does not deter Paul Miller from stating: "John explicitly states that Isaiah and Abraham *saw* Christ, and the same can be inferred of Moses" ("'They Saw His Glory and Spoke of Him': The Gospel of John and the Old Testament," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* [ed. S. E. Porter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 146).

John (the Baptist) as a Character in the Fourth Gospel

The Narrative Strategy of a Witness Disappearing

Ruben Zimmermann

John the Baptist is not a "baptist" in the Fourth Gospel. At least, he is not nicknamed "the Baptist" (ὁ βαπτιστής) as he is in the Synoptic Gospels.[1] Instead, he is the "witness" par excellence, a point on which there is near consensus in Johannine scholarship. Catrin H. Williams has recently observed that it is "commonplace to claim that his character portrait in the Fourth Gospel is almost totally restricted to that of a witness."[2]

A closer look at the text, however, demonstrates that such a view is not nearly as clear as one might assume it to be. There is no statement explicitly telling the reader that John is "the witness" – no Ἰωάννης ὁ μάρτυρος or ὁ μάρτυς, not even ὁ μαρτυρῶν. At the same time, however, nobody would seriously question that John, from the first to the last reference, is characterized as a witness. After introducing John by name in the prologue, the author tells the reader: οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ (John 1:6). And in the last scene in which John appears, the testimony (μαρτυρία) once again plays an important role (John 3:32–33). Accordingly John acts as a witness, or he is narrated as one who permanently bears witness; however, he is not "told" to be "the witness" through the use of a classifying noun.

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[1] See ὁ βαπτιστής as the dominant "title" in Matthew (Matt 3:1; 11:11–12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13) and Luke (Luke 7:20, 33; 9:19); in Mark we find apart from ὁ βαπτιστής (Mark 6:25; 8:28) also ὁ βαπτίζων (Mark 6:14 and probably 1:4); the participle without article is also used in John 1:28, 31; 3:23; 10:40 (with article it is used for Jesus ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, see John 1:33).

[2] C. H. Williams, "John (the Baptist): The Witness on the Threshold," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. S. Hunt, F. Tolmie and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 46–60; S. Brown, "John the Baptist: Witness and Embodiment of the Prologue in the Gospel of John," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John* (ed. C. W. Skinner; LNTS 461; London/New York: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2013), 147–64; see also R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 132–33: "He is introduced as a witness to Jesus (…). He is a true witness, a witness comparable to scripture."

These introductory observations already reveal the focus and method I wish to employ when considering John (the Baptist) in the following article. I said: the author "tells" the reader – and "telling," as the counterpart to "showing," is one of the fundamental techniques of characterization. To apply this once again to John: We are not told that John is "the witness," but he is "shown" to be the one who witnesses. This differentiation between the so-called "direct" versus "indirect presentation" is only one aspect within the narrative approach of characterization. Others will be explored below.

Thus, in the following sections I will consider John as a character through the use of narratological methods. The so-called "historical John the Baptist" or the comparison between the presentation of this figure in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel,[3] or in other sources on the Baptist like Q or Josephus, will not be analyzed in this paper. My particular focus is rooted within the text of the Fourth Gospel itself, a text which is not so much interested in the historical background of the Baptizer as a "historical person," but in the role he plays within the divine plan.

I. A Brief Introduction to Different Approaches to "Character and Characterization"

Narratological methods in general and character analysis in particular are established in Johannine scholarship since the "narrative turn" in the seventies.[4] For this reason, I will concentrate on more recent and German studies, namely from Fotis Jannidis, Jens Eder, and Sönke Finnern.

Fotis Jannidis[5] made quite a number of contributions to the study of character, some of which are highlighted here. A character is defined as

[3] On the presentation of John the Baptist in Synoptic traditions, see, for example, J. Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer – der Lehrer Jesu?* (Biblische Bücher 2; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1994), 11–50; U. B. Müller, *Johannes der Täufer: Jüdischer Prophet und Wegbereiter Jesu* (Biblische Gestalten 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 100–62. See also K. Backhaus, "Echoes from the Wilderness: The Historical John the Baptist," in *The Study of Jesus* (vol. 2 of *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*; ed. T. Holmén and S. E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1747–85.

[4] See for an overview on the method of character analysis as well as on the application within New Testament scholarship S. Hunt, D. F. Tolmie, and R. Zimmermann, "An Introduction to Character and Characterization in John and Related New Testament Literature," in Hunt et al., *Character Studies*, 1–33 (n. 2); C. W. Skinner, "Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John: Reflections on the *Status Quaestionis*," in *Characters and Characterization*, xvii–xxxii (n. 2); R. Zimmermann, "Figurenanalyse im Johannesevangelium: Ein Beitrag zu Sinn und Wahrheit narratologischer Exegese," *ZNW* 105 (2014): 20–53.

[5] F. Jannidis, *Figur und Person: Beitrag zu einer historischen Narratologie* (Narratologia 3; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2004).

follows: "Die Figur ist ein mentales Modell eines Modell-Lesers, das inkremental im Fortgang des Textes gebildet wird."[6] According to Jannidis, this model presupposes a basic type according to which a distinction is made between internal being and external appearance. External appearance is that which is observable by other characters as well as the narrator, whereas internal being is observable only to the narrator. With regard to the nature of the information on characters that is provided in a text, Jannidis[7] identifies four important dimensions: reliability, mode, relevance and straightforwardness. The process of characterization is also discussed in detail. According to Jannidis,[8] some of the issues that are important in this regard include that of how long and how often a particular character is characterized, the extent to which the sources of information with regard to a character are mixed, how often the same information about a character is provided, the order in which the information about a particular character is revealed, whether everything about a character is revealed at once or whether it is distributed throughout the text, how information about a character is linked to other information that is provided, and which information about a character is linked to other characters.

Jens Eder's[9] book is devoted specifically to characters in films, but also contains much about character analysis in general. The two basic theoretical issues that he discusses are how one can analyze characters in a systematic way and how one can explain the various ways in which viewers of films experience characters. The character model that he proposes consists of four aspects, and is designated by him as a "clock" ("Uhr") of character.[10] The four aspects are: 1) characters as artifacts, 2) characters as fictional beings, 3) characters as symbols, and 4) characters as symptoms. If one focuses on characters as *artifacts*, the questions investigated typically concern composition and textual aspects, with characters being classified as, for example, realistic or multi-dimensional.[11] When characters are considered as *fictional beings*, the focus falls on the properties that characters possess within a fictional world and how they act within that world.[12] When characters are analyzed as *symbols*, one asks the question as to whether characters represent something, that is, whether they represent, for example, a deeper or even an allegorical meaning.[13] When characters are

[6] Ibid., 240.

[7] Ibid., 201–07.

[8] Ibid., 220–21.

[9] J. Eder, *Die Figur im Film: Grundlagen der Figurenanalyse* (Marburg: Schüren, 2008).

[10] Ibid., 131–42.

[11] Ibid., 322–425.

[12] Ibid., 426–520.

[13] Ibid., 529–41.

considered in terms of *symptoms*, the focal issue is that of how characters are "caused"; in other words, which effects were used to produce them.[14] According to Eder, scholars tend to concentrate on one aspect only, namely characters as fictional beings. By means of the model that he proposes, one is encouraged to investigate other issues as well.

Many of these fundamental works on characters have had an influence on the way in which biblical scholars approach characterization. To offer only a few examples: *D. Francois Tolmie* adopts Chatman's definition of character as paradigm traits along with techniques of direct and indirect characterization in order to highlight the "process of characterization."[15] *James L. Resseguie*[16] takes up Forster's distinction between round and flat characters, adding three other character types, namely stocks, foils and walk-ons.[17] This is followed by a distinction between dynamic and static characters.[18] Subsequently, the distinction between showing and telling is considered. *Cornelis Bennema*[19] follows the framework of Rimmon-Kenan[20] who herself based her classification of characters on Joseph Ewen's three continua,[21] namely complexity, development and penetration into inner life.[22] *Sönke Finnern*[23] followed Eder in his "Handlungsrollenmodell";[24] furthermore, he explored an integrative methodology for the analysis of biblical characters that focuses on the following six aspects: 1. Collection of and relationship between characters (issues relating to the identification

[14] Ibid., 541–53.

[15] D. F. Tolmie, *Narratology and Biblical Narratives: A Practical Guide* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999; repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 41–52.

[16] J. L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

[17] Ibid., 123–25.

[18] Ibid., 126–27.

[19] C. Bennema, "A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 375–421; idem, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009). Bennema has recently sharpened his theory further in "A Comprehensive Approach to Understanding Character in the Gospel of John," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, 36–59 (n. 2); idem, *A Theory of Character for New Testament Narrative: A Proposed Paradigm for Character Reconstruction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

[20] S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), 29–42, 59–70 (2d ed. London: Routledge, 2002).

[21] J. Ewen, "The Theory of Character in Narrative Fiction," *Hasifrut* 3 (1971): 1–30 (Hebrew).

[22] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 40–41 (n. 20).

[23] S. Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese: Eine integrative Methode der Erzählanalyse und ihr Ertrag am Beispiel von Matthäus* (WUNT 2/285; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 162–64.

[24] See ibid., 150–51.

of characters in a particular scene and classification of characters in terms of main and subsidiary figures); 2. Character traits (issues that are relevant to the traits associated with characters and the personality of characters); 3. Constellation of figures (pertaining to aspects such as the particular group to which characters belong and the hierarchy between characters); 4. Character and action (issues such as the importance of a particular character for the events that are narrated and the function that a particular character fulfills); 5. Characterization (issues such as the techniques used to characterize and the extent to which characterization is convincing); and 6. Conceptualization[25] of characters (issues such as whether a character is flat or round). Finnern, again drawing on Eder,[26] ends up distinguishing between five types of Characters: a) "diegetische Figuren," b) "artifizielle Figuren," c) "symbolische Figuren," d) "symptomatische Figuren," and e) "performative Figuren."[27]

I will not here enter into a discussion of these important works on characters and character analysis, however, I would like to make a general observation and note that as helpful as such nuanced methods of character analysis are, their usefulness must ultimately be proven in their application to the text itself. Increasing methodological sophistication is only really justified when it is actually capable of offering or stimulating insight into new or previously overlooked aspects of a text. My own thoughts, therefore, do not follow a one-to-one application of a particular method, but rather draw on various narratological techniques in order to cast light upon a variety of dimensions found within the text.

II. John (the Baptist) in the Johannine Prologue

Earlier source-critical scholarship on the Johannine prologue tended to view the passages concerning John as secondary insertions into the prologue. In his admirable exegesis and interpretation of the prologue, Otfried Hofius, for example, sees the Baptist passages as disturbing the four stanza structure of the hymn.[28]

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[25] Our translation of "Figurenkonzeption"; Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese*, 164 (n. 23).

[26] See Eder, *Figur im Film*, 144–45 (n. 9); Eder does not use the concept of "performative Figur."

[27] See Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese*, 162 (n. 23).

[28] See O. Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus in Joh 1,1–18," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 1–25.

Die Verse 6–8.12d+13 und 15 [sind] als sekundäre Zusätze zu dem Logos-Hymnus zu beurteilen. Für die Verse 6–8 und 15 liegt das auf der Hand: Die deutlich prosaischen Stil verratenden und den Textzusammenhang spürbar unterbrechenden Aussagen über Johannes den Täufer sind nach Form und Inhalt fest mit den beiden Täufer-Abschnitten 1,19–34 und 3,22ff. verbunden (…), indem sie nachdrücklich betonen, daß Johannes nur der 'Zeuge' eines anderen – nämlich des Logos – gewesen ist.[29]

I do not wish at this point to enter into the discussion concerning the genesis of the Johannine prologue.[30] Suffice it to say, it is equally erroneous to view the verses concerning the Baptist as the key to understanding the prologue as it is to declare them to be fundamentally irrelevant.[31] Of course, on the basis of linguistic and stylistic peculiarities, there is good reason to conclude that the text went through several layers of development, the reconstruction of which certainly makes sense in certain contexts, as Michael Theobald has brilliantly demonstrated.[32] At the same time, the narratological approach pursued here is interested in exegeting the canonical form of the text and in shedding light upon the meaning of the present form of the text. It is precisely because diachronic approaches, and their interest in the origin and development of the text, have often neglected the coherence of the canonical text that I would like to employ narrative criticism in order to shed some light on the potential of the present form of the text. What significance can be found precisely in the integration of the John passages into the prologue? What role does the mention of John in the prologue play?

1. Inventory of Characters

Let us begin by taking inventory of the characters that appear in the narrative scenes with John. At the outset of our "Character Studies" volume we

[29] Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang", 2 (n. 28).

[30] See, for instance, C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 333–63; M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 105–06; U. C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, Vol. 2: *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 17–24.

[31] See for the former view T. Thatcher, "The Riddle of the Baptist and the Genesis of the Prologue: John 1:1–18 in Oral/Aural Media Culture," in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (ed. A. Le Donne and T. Thatcher; LNTS 426; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 29–48; for the latter see H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 64.

[32] See for the research history on this issue M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), 3–161.

offer a table that simply presents characters and their appearance in the narrative in a direct and lucid way.[33]

Character	Narrative Scenes	Textual References	Interactions
John (the Baptist)	John 1:6–18, 19–36; 3:22–36	Ἰωάννης = 18x: John 1:6, 15, 19, 26, 28, 32, 35, 40; 3:23–27; 4:1; 5:33, 36; 10:40–41	Priests, Levites, Jesus, Two Disciples (including Andrew), A "Jew," Other Disciples

Fig. 1: Reference on John (the Baptist) in the Fourth Gospel

For John, in addition to the three narrative scenes in which he appears as an active participant, there are additional textual references in which John is merely mentioned, a so-called "distant focalization" by Jesus or the narrator. Let us focus our attention here on the prologue, beginning with verses 6–8 and 15. The first character to step onto the stage in the Fourth Gospel is John. After vv. 1–5, appropriately labeled the "prologue within the prologue," v. 6 introduces the next section of prologue with a new subject:

6 Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης·
7 οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς **μαρτυρίαν** ἵνα **μαρτυρήσῃ** περὶ τοῦ φωτός,
ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ.
8 οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα **μαρτυρήσῃ** περὶ τοῦ φωτός.

Let us take just a moment to consider the structure of this section. Verse 6 offers an opening exposition, which some identify as a classical narrative opening, in which three points are made: a man appears on the scene, he has been sent by God, and whose name is John. Verses 7 and 8 contain additional information concerning the content and goal of this sending. The threefold repetition of the semantemes μαρτυρία/μαρτυρέω and φῶς are striking, and the three ἵνα-sentences dominate the structure.[34] This John appears for a particular purpose and with a clear intention, namely, in order to bear witness to the light. This, at least, is what the verbal repetition in the first and third ἵνα-sentence appears to wish to impress upon the reader.

It seems to me, that the negation in v. 8 is somewhat unusual for an opening exposition: why is it necessary to state overtly and distinctly οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' …? Were there some (e.g., among the addresses of the text), who claimed that he was? Does the introduction of the character

[33] See S. A. Hunt, D. F. Tolmie, and R. Zimmermann, "Table on the Characters in the Fourth Gospel," in Hunt et al., *Character Studies*, 34–45 (n. 2).

[34] See F. J. Moloney, S.D.B., *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 35.

John at the same time necessitate the correction of other conceptions concerning this character?

2. Constellation of Characters

The statement concerning the relationship of John to the light leads us, narratologically speaking, down another track: characters do not appear in isolation, but rather stand in relationship to one another. This is refered to as a "character constellation."

It is perhaps surprising, given the paucity of brush strokes in the portrait of John, to discover that every significant character with whom John interacts and is later brought into relationship is already mentioned here.

1) There is the sending by *God* (ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ). The Baptist does not act independently, but rather through a direct commission by God. This commissioning draws from and builds upon the language of the prophetic call, and even the naming of John can be seen within this context. In the Fourth Gospel, only the paraclete and especially Jesus himself are sent directly by God.

2) The relationship to *Jesus* is in view, though for the moment expressed through the "light" metaphor. John is brought into relationship with the light (bears witness to the light) but also set apart from the light (is not the light).

3) The relationship to *humanity* is mentioned. John is introduced as ἄνθρωπος and he should bring "all (people)" to faith.

With these three relational coordinates, that is the relationship to God, Jesus, and humanity, a framework and system of relationships is constructed into which the other scenes involving encounters with John can be embedded. The constellation, however, is not exhausted simply in the mentioning, but also in the evaluation and hierarchical nature of a relationship: John acts with a divine mandate, and yet there is no doubt that he is a man and remains a man. He testifies to the light, but he is not the light. In this way, the constellation of characters creates both proximity and distance, relatedness and delineation, superordination and subordination. This is highlighted and developed particularly in the second section of the prologue mentioning John, namely v. 15.

Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ
καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων·

οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον·
ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν,
ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

In the final section of the prologue (vv. 14–18) and immediately following the central verse related to the incarnation (v. 14), John is mentioned anew, and this time with his own dialogue: "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." Hereby the relationship between John

and Jesus is definitively defined: the Baptist appeared first on the scene; however, Jesus is the superior one. This is expressed above all through the temporal relationship, since before John existed, the Logos already was. The two uses of ἦν bring v. 15 into contact with John 1:1–2 and its fourfold use of ἦν. In this way and within the context of the entire prologue a "series of contrasting parallels" between John and the Jesus-Logos is created, convincingly numerated by Williams as "John came into being (1:6: ἐγένετο), but the Logos was (ἦν) in the beginning (1:1); John is a man (1:6), the Logos is 'God' (1:1); God has sent John (1:6), the Logos is with God (1:1); John is a witness to the light (1:7–8), the Logos is the light (1:4); people come to faith in the Logos (1:12) through John (1:7)."[35]

3. Characterization

V. 15 is, however, also revealing in another regard. In vv. 6–8 the statements concerning John remain on the "telling" level, the level of direct presentation. In v. 15, the Baptist himself speaks with a notable temporal shift. Verses 6–8 have the historical sending of John in view (see the aorist verbal forms of ἐγένετο and ἦλθεν) whereas v. 15 speaks into the present reality of the community or, more broadly, of the reader: John here testifies in the present (μαρτυρεῖ – present tense)! The λέγων does not merely introduce direct speech, but more precisely introduces the speech within the speech: οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον·

Linguistically, this is an awkward manner of speaking and one which destroys the poetic style of the hymn. Narratologically, however, John's citation of his own words marks a significant feature of John's characterization that formally prefigures the later John passages: we are not simply dealing with a witness, but can already see that this witness is introduced as a "witness to witnessing." John thus becomes an example of the passing on of a testimony and serves, as Culpepper puts it, "as a model of what his followers should do."[36]

4. Character Traits

A character analysis is largely executed along the lines of the features or characteristics of a character. What traits of John can we identify? Here I would like to provide a summary overview of the traits arising out of the information provided in the prologue. Each character trait can also be assigned a meaning and a formal function on the discourse level (the "how" of the description).

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[35] Williams, "John (the Baptist)", 49 (n. 2).
[36] Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 133 (n. 2).

Trait	Meaning	Form/Media:
1) Human being, sent by God	Between heaven and earth, past and present	First character in both the prologue and body
2) Witness	Testifies concerning the identity of Jesus Christ; model for/ example of witnessing	Citation of his own words: witness of witnessing; metaphoricity
3) Subordinate	Emphasizes the superiority of the light-logos	Negation
4) Establisher of faith	Being sent is for the benefit of all	Central positioning of the ἵνα-sentence concerning faith

Fig. 2: Character Traits of John (the Baptist) in the Prologue

III. John (the Baptist) in the Body of the Gospel

Given the time constraints, it is self-evident that the remaining passages involving John cannot be discussed in detail here. Therefore, basing myself on Chatman's "paradigm of traits," I would like to highlight a few places where aspects of John's character presented in the prologue are taken up and developed.

1. John 1:19–36: Threefold Witnessing

The actual plot of the Gospel begins with v. 19. As is the case in the prologue, John is the first character mentioned in the narrated account. The threefold structure already evident in the prologue (threefold μαρτυρία – μαρτυρέω and φῶς as well as three ἵνα-sentences in John 1:6–8) is taken up repeatedly in the first narrative section.

The now present-tense narrated account of the witness (see v. 19: This *is* the testimony …) is recounted over the course of three days (see τῇ ἐπαύριον – the next day in John 1:29, 35; and for the next passage cf. 1:43); there are three negations concerning the identity of John (John 1:20–21: John is not the Messiah, not Elijah, nor the prophet); and there are three positive statements concerning Jesus' identity (1:30: Lamb of God; 1:33: Spirit-baptizer; 1:34: Chosen/Son of God).[37]

In this section, the camera angle, in a manner of speaking, the point of view (focalization) is of particular interest for our narratological perspective. John is the main actor. It is *to him* that a delegation from Jerusalem is sent in order to ask who he is (1:19). *To him* people come in order to be baptized (1:28–29). *He* has disciples (1:35). Without a doubt, John is the

[37] See Williams, "John (the Baptist)", 51 (n. 2).

protagonist in the "Wahrnehmungszentrum."[38] But the observant reader recognizes an oversized index finger, which Matthias Grünewald so appropriately painted in his depiction of John in the Isenheim altarpiece, pointing to another. The narrative eyes are fixed upon John, but he turns attention away from himself and towards another, one who up until now has remained in the shadows ("Among you stands one whom you do not know," v. 26). This deflection of attention to another occurs in three ways, each of which reflects an attribute that has traditionally been ascribed to the Baptist:[39]

People come to repent; the baptism is apparently intended for the forgiveness of sins. Yet, it is not the Baptist, but "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). John was sent to baptize with water, but the Spirit descended onto Jesus and he baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33). Those from Jerusalem ask if John is the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet (1:20–21, 25). Jesus, however, is more than these titles, for he is the "Son of God" (1:34). It therefore follows that John's disciples must follow Jesus, just as it is enacted in John 1:35–37.

2. John 3:23–30, 31–36: He Who Has the Bride …

In this second scene involving John I would like to draw attention to the riddle, or, spoken in the language of John, the παροιμία, of the witness and to the relational dimension.

Perhaps we are not as consciously aware of the metaphorical content of John's language in the prologue, for "light" or "the coming one" have, to a certain extent, become names of Jesus. Now, however, a short parable concerning "bride and bridegroom" offers a clear example of figurative speech/imagery. The "friend of the bridegroom" metaphor already contains two layers of meaning, since, on the one hand, one relates this to the traditional "best man,"[40] and on the other hand, within the context of the Fourth Gospel the term φίλος refers to the ethics of brotherly love among Jesus' disciples.

Yet, it is not so much John as it is Christ who is to be qualified through the Messiah-bridegroom metaphor. The witness of John is often carried out through images, circumlocution, and even riddles. Similarly, in John 3:31–

[38] See on this term Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese*, 171–75 (n. 23).

[39] From this point of view one may conclude, that the concept of John (the Baptist) in the Fourth Gospel takes up the Synoptic presentation of John the Baptist, see M. Theobald, "Exkurs: Die johanneische und synoptische Täuferüberlieferung," in idem, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 148–50 (n. 30).

[40] See the rabbinic references in M. Zimmermann and R. Zimmermann, "Der Freund des Bräutigams (Joh 3,29): Deflorations- oder Christuszeuge?," *ZNW* 90 (1999): 123–30.

36 Jesus is spoken of in curiously cryptic speech: "He who comes from above … he who comes from heaven" (v. 31).

John also speaks of the previously great unknown one, who is initially not known by either his addressees (John 1:26), or – as he twice avers – by him (1:31, 33). At the same time, pictures and images should lead to a clear vision. The witness of John is thus implemented visually. He is an eyewitness, he himself saw (John 1:34),[41] and he also initiates his disciples in the world of seeing: "Look!" (John 1:29, 36)

The scene in John 3:22–26 also takes up the character relationship between John and Jesus. Though the characters are to a certain extent paralleled (both baptize, John 3:22–23; both have disciples, John 3:22, 25, who address them as "Rabbi," John 3:26; cf. 1:49; 3:2), the differences between the two characters are strikingly reinforced. John's opening words repeat that which the reader already knows on the basis of the prologue. John is "only" a man (3:27; cf. 1:6); Jesus, however, is from above, from heaven. He is above all (3:21) and speaks God's words. The self-limitation of the Baptist stands opposite the boundless Jesus. The goal here is also belief in the Son in order to attain eternal life (v. 36).

3. John 5:31–38: Testimony of the Lamp

Within a long speech by Jesus in a controversy with the Jews the elements "witness," "surpassing," as well as "being human" are taken up. It is interesting to note here the direction in which the reader is led. With Jesus rejecting any self-attestation (v. 31), the necessity of an attestation by another is not only hinted at but also immediately confirmed: There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true (v. 32). The previous course of the Gospel inevitably leads the reader to think of John, whose testifying function has been known since the prologue, as the "other witness." And, as a matter of fact, this expectation is confirmed as John is mentioned in v. 33:

John 5:33
ὑμεῖς ἀπεστάλκατε πρὸς Ἰωάννην, καὶ μεμαρτύρηκεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·
You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth.

Although, the following "ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ … (ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου τὴν μαρτυρίαν λαμβάνω, John 5:34)" immediately reveals that this witness, in fact, was *not* the one meant. The testimony of John is "true," but it is – as we have also known since the prologue – "only" human testimony. Jesus, however, has – as explicitly stated in v. 36 – "a testimony greater than John's" (Ἐγὼ δὲ ἔχω τὴν μαρτυρίαν μείζω τοῦ Ἰωάννου).

[41] Jesus bears witness to what he has seen, cf. John 3:31.

This "greater testimony" is explicated in two ways: on the one hand, the "works" of the Father that Jesus does are a witness and, on the other hand, the "Father" himself sent him and directly testifies concerning him (καὶ ὁ πέμψας με πατὴρ ἐκεῖνος μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ ἐμοῦ). In this way the testimony, once again, is threefold: Baptist – works – Father.

This feature of the surpassing of the Baptist, or better of the witness of the Baptist by Jesus is expressed in the light-lamp metaphor of v. 35.

John 5:35
ἐκεῖνος ἦν ὁ λύχνος ὁ καιόμενος καὶ φαίνων,
ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι πρὸς ὥραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ.
He was a burning and shining lamp,
and you were willing to rejoice (only) for an hour in its (!) light.

In the prologue we already heard the negatively formulated statement that John is "not the light," a statement that is here formulated along the lines that John is "only" a lamp. Even though one can rejoice for an hour in its light, it remains a temporary, a substitute light, whereas Jesus – as John 8:12 states in no uncertain terms – is "the light of the world" who gives sight to the blind (John 9).

4. John 10:40–41: Many Believers across the Jordan

The final mention of John, for its part, leads back to the outset. Following John 10:41, Jesus leaves Jerusalem and returns to the location across the Jordan where John had previously baptized. It is not only the spatial connection that comes full circle to the first John scene in the corpus of the Gospel and its explicit mention of "Bethany across the Jordan" (1:28). The following aspects also refer back to that which has gone on before:

It is stated that "John performed no sign" (v. 41), which points back to John 5:33–36, where it is precisely the "works" (ἔργα) which bear witness to Jesus. Further, the double-mentioning of "many" (vv. 41 and 42) is notable: it is the thronging of Jesus, the coming to him that is mentioned time and again in the John passages. The first disciples of John are passed on to Jesus (1:35) and in John 3:22–26 the coming to Jesus is in view (3:26). In the image shortly thereafter, "he who has the bride is the bridegroom," the picture is also one of having the Messiah (3:28–30).

This group of followers is also repeatedly tied to quantitative expressions. The prologue already mentions "all" (πάντες, v. 7). In John 3:26 we read "all are coming to him" (καὶ πάντες ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτόν) and in John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease" followed by "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" (4:1).

The coming of *many* to Jesus joins seamlessly to all this. Of course, "coming" in Johannine language is a theologically loaded term that often appears as a synonym for "believing." Corresponding to this point, the

passage reaches its apex in the fact that not only do many come but also that many "believed in him" (10:42).

IV. The Concept of Character

In conclusion I would like to summarize a few aspects of the presentation of John in the Fourth Gospel that would most likely align with what the scholarly literature addresses under the heading *Character Concept* (*Figurenkonzeption*[42]). Bultmann had already described the Johannine depiction of the Baptist as a "literarisches Gebilde" and, in his words, "(es) dürfte nicht zweifelhaft sein, … daß der für Jesus zeugende Täufer eine Gestalt der christlichen Geschichtsdeutung ist."[43] But what precisely is entailed in this conception of John and how is this characterization of John presented?

Is the characterization, as many scholars point out, limited to one single trait of bearing witness to Jesus?[44] If so, should we conclude that John is a "flat,"[45] static, and one-dimensional character? Is he, in the character constellation, a typical, but unspectacular "adjuvant" (Greimas) of the hero? If, as we have seen, the significant traits of this character can already be recognized in the prologue, then – as Cornelis Bennema summarizes in his monograph – are we missing greater complexity or at least the development of the character?[46] Even if the characterization of John as witness to Christ remains a fitting, though also a somewhat banal summary judgment, at the very least a narratival character analysis has been able to show that the Johannine conception of a witness is anything but "flat" and monotone.

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[42] See for instance Eder, *Figur im Film*, 375–99 (n. 9); Finnern, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese*, 156–62 (n. 23).

[43] R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (21st ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 121. For Bultmann there is a conflict between the "Täufer- und der Jesus-Sekte" in the historical background.

[44] R. F. Collins, "From John to the Beloved Disciple: An Essay on Johannine Characters," *Int* 49 (1995): 359–69, 368, n. 19; C. M. Conway, "Speaking through Ambiguity: Minor Characters in the Fourth Gospel," *BibInt* 10 (2002): 324–41, here 330.

[45] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 73–81, used the phrase "flat characters" to describe predictable and one-dimensional characters constructed around a single idea or quality, and "round characters" for those who possess more than one quality and show signs of development.

[46] Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 30 (n. 19). Bennema states that there is no "development"; however, he argues that John's characterization in the Fourth Gospel is not only flat but more complex, and according to his classification system he ranks him between "type" and "personality." Bennema employs the term "type" to classify characters possessing a single trait, and "personality" for characters who display development and a measure of complexity but are not fully round; see idem, "A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel," 407 (n. 19).

This is true both in terms of content (on the story-level, the "what" of the narrative) and "form" (on the discourse level, the "how" of the narrative).

1. Substantial Conceptualization (Character Traits; Character and Plot)

The testimony to Christ is multifaceted and unique in the Gospel of John; here stereotypical titles of Christ are not simply repeated. Rather, a process of christological discovery is introduced in which the great unknown one (1:26, 31, 33) is made visible through tradition-rich symbols (like light, lamb, bridegroom) and through temporal (before-after) and spatial (coming, above-below) metaphors. Concrete declarations of high christology, however, are not lacking, whether preexistence (1:15, 30), soteriology as cosmic forgiveness of sins (1:29), or the description of identity as "Son of God" (1:34).

John himself stands somewhere in between. He is a man, but divinely commissioned. His temporal testimony reaches beyond his own time and even into contemporary significance. I can only agree with Williams's statement, "John is characterized as a connecting link (…) between heavenly and earthly, the eternal and the historical, the old and the new … he emerges at a point of transition – both spatially (in the wilderness) and chronologically (on the first day). … His legacy as a character is that he fulfills a bridge-like role."[47]

If the prologue is, as Zumstein, in my view, rightly states "die Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium,"[48] then John is "the Witness on the threshold."[49] According to Sherri Brown, "John the Baptist is the Prologue embodied (who …) points to Jesus as the Lamb of God … and directs the first disciples to Jesus."[50] Taking up a Johannine metaphor, one could say that John is the gatekeeper (ὁ θυρωρός), who – as we discover in 10:3 – opens the door so that not only he may hear the voice of the bridegroom, but all sheep may hear the voice of the shepherd and follow him.

The function of the witness also consists in leading others, indeed "all," to faith. This was already stated in the prologue: "so that all might believe through him" ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ (1:7). The last words spoken by the Baptist also name this goal: "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (3:36).

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[47] See Williams, "John (the Baptist)," 48, 60 (n. 2).

[48] See J. Zumstein, "Der Prolog, Schwelle zum vierten Evangelium," in idem, *Kreative Erinnerung: Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (2d ed.; ATANT 84; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 105–26, here e.g. 114: "Das Vorwort muss die Hörerschaft über den Zweck des Werks unterrichten und ihr die Mittel liefern, dessen Gegenstand oder Verlauf zu verstehen."

[49] See the subtitle of Williams's article, Williams, "John (the Baptist)," 46 (n. 2).

[50] See Brown, "John the Baptist," 163 (n. 2).

The function of John's commission of witness, therefore, is not exhausted in simply testifying, but also consists in making witnesses of others. As Lincoln puts it, "Belief is depicted as made possible through witness, and true reception of such witness – true belief – is shown to involve a person's total allegiance."[51]

2. Formal Conceptualization (Focalization and Characterization)

This concept is implemented particularly through the "how" of the narrative, as I would like to show through the aspects of focalization and self-referentiality.

Let us first consider the perspective, the point of view, used to present John. The first time he is mentioned is in the prologue (1:6–18), the sole human worthy of being mentioned in this heavenly prelude. In the second scene, found at the opening of the Gospel proper (John 1:29–37), John stands as protagonist in the "*Wahrnehmungszentrum*" and actually has a direct encounter with Jesus, an encounter that, however, remains one-sided and curiously skewed. The Baptist sees Jesus but does not speak to, but rather about him. Jesus remains the great taciturn one.

Here a transition to the disciples already takes place (1:35–36), who are determinative in the third scene (3:22–26). In this passage the issue is the size of the crowd coming to Jesus or to the Baptist, who are acting alongside each other. The disciples of the Baptist are the ones who pose the question and are then the addressees of the long speech by John in which he once again clearly underscores the superiority of Jesus and prepares his own departure (I must decrease, 3:30).[52] It is only in the fourth scene that Jesus speaks, in retrospect about the Baptist (John 5), as if he were already past history (5:35: he was … a lamp). In the final scene (10:40–42)[53] only the location of John's baptism is in view. John himself has disappeared.

Thus, John arrives in prominence, but in every scene he fades more and more into the background. The "development" of this character consists of a successive disappearance. The testifying John leaves the scene – but precisely in this way he fulfills his function since others take over his role, a fact recognized at the latest by John 10.

This transferring of the "office" of witness onto others is narratively marked with a significant element in the characterization. The self-citation in the prologue (1:15: "This was he of whom I said") points in the direc-

[51] See A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 59.

[52] In the narrator's comment in John 3:24 the arrest of John (the Baptist) is mentioned and it is obviously assumed to be already known.

[53] See R. Zimmermann, "The Believers across the Jordan: On Location with Jesus," in Hunt et al., *Character Studies*, 451–59 (n. 2).

tion in which the testimony of John will be staged as an interwoven cross-referencing of the declaration of witnesses. In the first narrative sequence, this verse is repeated almost verbatim (1:30: This is he of whom I said …). We can interpret the temporal shift of the witness at the end of this scene in a similar manner: an ἐμαρτύρησεν (1:32) becomes a μεμαρτύρηκα (1:34); John no longer only testifies, he speaks of his service as witness.

In John 3 this technique continues when John says "You yourself bear me witness that I said …" (3:28). Those addressed are declared to be witnesses, though ultimately the goal, of course, is neither to be a witness of John nor to repeat his negative testimony at this point ("I am not the Christ"). It is much more that the addressees are being challenged in their own role as witnesses. In this way John can be seen as presented not only as typical or artificial, but also as a "performative Figur" (Finnern) who effects a powerful reader response.

It is surprising, that the actual "witness" word (μαρτυρία and the verbal μαρτυρέω) are missing in this final mention of John in 10:40–42. The concept, however, is present. To testify means to speak the truth and correspondingly we read "everything that John said … was true" (10:41). Ultimately it comes down to the function of the witness, namely to stand up for truth. But there is more. In an ingenious way a change of perspective, of a point of view narratively considered, takes place. The testimony of John is not repeated, rather his testimony is testified to. And it is not the mouth of the evangelist that does so, but rather the mouths of those who followed Jesus. Now we understand why John is no longer needed as a witness. It is the many believers located at John's place who here take up and fulfill the role of witness and in this way demonstrate their faith. John has fulfilled his mission. He can exit the scene. His example as witness has found followers[54] and in this way has called into life the community of witnesses.

[54] See "The many believers across the Jordan" also serve as a role model for the readers, see Zimmermann, "The Believers across the Jordan," in Hunt et al., *Character Studies*, 455–59 (n. 2).

Eine Gemeinschaft von „Zeugen“ (von Joh 1:7, 15 bis 3 Joh 12)

Beobachtungen zur Genese des *Corpus Iohanneum* auf der Basis des Prologs

Michael Theobald

Die Bildung von literarischen Kleincorpora ist Kennzeichen frühchristlicher Literatur. Gerd Theißen führt unter dem Stichwort „Kanonische Cluster von Evangelien und weiteren Gattungen“ vier Beispiele auf: neben dem *Corpus Iohanneum* das lukanische Doppelwerk, Matthäusevangelium + Didache sowie Matthäusevangelium + *Corpus Paulinum* + Ignatiusbriefe.[1] Es gab „die Tendenz“, so schreibt er, „ein Evangelium mit einer weiteren Schrift zu verbinden. Durchgesetzt hat sich die Kombination von Evangelien und Briefen. Aber es bahnten sich auch Kombinationen mit anderen Schriften an, so dass wir verschiedene kanonische (oder vorkanonische) Cluster im Urchristentum beobachten können. Wo immer in ihm eine Kombination von ‚Evangelium + eine weitere Textsorte‘ belegbar ist, wurden erste Schritte in Richtung auf einen Kanon getan.“ Zum *Corpus Iohanneum* führt Theißen aus:

[1] G. Theißen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem* (Schriften der Philosophisch-Historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 40; Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), 297–300, 299: „Die Didache ist im Schlepptau des MtEv entstanden, wie der 1 Joh im Schlepptau des JohEv. Das MtEv schließt mit der Aufforderung, alle Völker zu taufen und zu lehren, was Jesus gesagt hat. Die Didache enthält als Fortsetzung des MtEv die Tauflehre, die im MtEv fehlt“ (mit Bezug auf G. Garleff, *Urchristliche Identität in Matthäusevangelium, Didache und Jakobusbrief* [Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel 9; Münster: LIT, 2004]; ebd., 299–300: „Das MtEv war zugleich das Evangelium des Bischofs Ignatius von Antiochien. Der bewunderte Paulus als Märtyrer und Briefschreiber. Seine Briefe ahmen dessen Briefsammlung nach. […] Möglicherweise hat Ignatius gehofft, dass seine eigenen Briefe im Schlepptau des Paulus gleichen Rang erhalten. Bei Ignatius von Antiochien bahnt sich somit ein Kanon in folgender Gestalt an: ‚MtEv (und andere Evv?) + Paulusbriefsammlung [+ Ignatiusbriefe?].‘ Aber nicht seine Briefe, sondern die katholischen Briefe sollten den Platz neben den Paulusbriefen einnehmen“).

Die johanneische Literatur ist ein Kanon in *statu nascendi*. Das Evangelium steht in seinem Zentrum. Im Schlepptau des JohEv entstand der 1 Joh, der die Gedanken des JohEv gegen Dissidenten verteidigt. Die johanneische Literatur verbindet somit zum ersten Mal Evangelium und Brief in einer zusammengehörenden Schriftengruppe. Für diese Weiterführung der johanneischen Literatur in den Briefen gibt es einen Grund, der im JohEv selbst angelegt ist. In seinen Abschiedsreden verheißt Jesus, dass er den Parakleten senden wird, der die Jünger in alle Wahrheit führen wird – auch über das hinaus, was sie bisher ertragen konnten (Joh 16:12–15). Ihre Freude wird in der Zukunft vollkommen sein (Joh 16:24; vgl. 15:11; 17:13). Der 1 Joh ist geschrieben, ‚damit unsere Freude vollkommen sei' (1 Joh 1:4). Er orientiert sich an der ‚Wahrheit' als Kriterium eines christlichen Lebens (1 Joh 1:6, 8; 2:4, 21). Wurde er geschrieben, um etwas von der weiterführenden Offenbarung des Parakleten zu vermitteln? Dem JohEv und den Johannesbriefen wird später noch die Johannesapokalypse zugeordnet. Das Corpus Johanneum ist somit eine Vorstufe des Kanons, bestehend aus dem kanonischen Cluster ‚Evangelium + Briefe + Apokalypse' […].[2]

Zwei Gründe macht G. Theißen demnach für die Entstehung des *Corpus Iohanneum* im engeren Sinne namhaft: einen eher äußeren Grund – die notwendig gewordene Kommentierung des Evangeliums durch ein Begleitschreiben[3] – und einen inneren: die Paraklet-Konzeption mit ihrem Poten-

[2] Theißen, *Entstehung*, 297–98 (Anm. 1). – Eine vergleichbare Zuordnung von 1. Johannesbrief zum Evangelium vertreten unter anderem C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947), XLVII–LVI; R. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; New York: Doubleday, 1982), 32–35 u. ö.; K. Wengst, *Der erste, zweite und dritte Brief des Johannes* (ÖTK 16; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1978), 24–25; vgl. auch H.-J. Klauck, *Die Johannesbriefe* (EdF 276; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 105–09, 107: Es ist anzunehmen, „dass der Briefautor nicht ‚ohne Netz und doppelten Boden' gearbeitet hat, sondern das Evangelium als Netz ausgespannt wusste, seinen Text in die durch das Evangelium erstellte Sprachwelt einbetten konnte"; R. A. Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 48; H. Hahn, *Tradition und Neuinterpretation im ersten Johannesbrief* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009). – Die Priorität des 1. Johannesbriefs vor dem Johannesevangelium vertritt zuletzt U. Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe* (THKNT 17; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010); dazu vgl. meine Besprechung in: *TLZ* 139 (2014): 66–68.

[3] Die Tatsache, dass es über dem Grundbuch des johanneischen Kreises zu einem Schisma gekommen ist (vgl. 1 Joh 2:18–21), machte seine „Kommentierung" notwendig – „Kommentierung" nicht in einem technischen Sinne, denn der Brief *zitiert* ja das Evangelium nirgends, aber er nimmt doch charakteristische Passagen und Wendungen aus ihm auf, um sie in ein neues Licht zu rücken. Dieser spezifische Relecture-Prozess beginnt im Proömium 1 Joh 1:1–4, das sich gezielt an den Prolog des Evangeliums anlehnt, und endet in 1Joh 5:13, einer Replik auf den sog. ersten Buchschluss Joh 20:31; vgl. H.-J. Klauck, *Der erste Johannesbrief* (EKK XXIII/1; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1991), 318–21; idem, *Johannesbriefe*, 56–58, 94–95 (Anm. 2), 57: „Dem Prolog zu Beginn des Schreibens in 1,1–4 entspricht am Ende ein Epilog. Wie sich der Prolog 1 Joh 1,1–4 am Evangelienprolog Joh 1,1–18 orientierte, so scheint sich der Epilog den Schlussabschnitt des Evangeliums zum Vorbild zu nehmen. 1 Joh 4,13 läuft weithin mit Joh 20,31, dem ursprünglichen Schlussvers des Evangeliums, parallel."

zial, den literarischen Prozess der Auslegung des Jesus-Geschehens weiter voranzutreiben.[4]

Zur Genese des *Corpus Iohanneum*, unter dem hier nur das Cluster von Evangelium und 1.–3. Johannesbrief verstanden werden soll,[5] lässt sich möglicherweise aber noch mehr sagen. Ausgangspunkt unserer Überlegungen ist die auffallende Verteilung der johanneischen Zeugnisterminologie auf die Schaltstellen der vier Schriften, die dadurch zu einem Korpus *verklammert* werden. Der Befund soll erhoben (unter 1.) und synchron und diachron gedeutet werden (unter 2.).

I. Die johanneische Zeugnisterminologie und ihre Verteilung auf das *Corpus Iohanneum*

Zur Zeugnisterminologie in den johanneischen Schriften gibt es eine Reihe von Studien,[6] ihre Distribution im *Corpus Iohanneum* ist bislang aber noch nicht beachtet, geschweige denn einer genaueren Betrachtung unterzogen worden. Folgende Tabelle möge eine erste Übersicht bieten:

	Prolog/Proömium	*Corpus*	*Epilog/Schlussteil*
Joh	μαρτυρέω: 1:7–8, 15 μαρτυρία: 1:7	μαρτυρέω: passim[7] μαρτυρία: passim[8]	μαρτυρέω: 21:24 μαρτυρία: 21:24
1 Joh	μαρτυρέω: 1:2	μαρτυρέω: 4:14; 5:6, 7, 9, 10 μαρτυρία: 5:9 (3 Mal); 5:10 (2 Mal); 5:11	---
2 Joh	---	---	---
3 Joh	---	μαρτυρέω: 3, 6	μαρτυρέω: 12 (2 Mal)

[4] Dazu vgl. umfassend M. Theobald, „Was und wen hat Jesus angekündigt? Das Rätsel um den Parakleten im johanneischen Schrifttum“, in *Hat Jesus Muhammad angekündigt? Der Paraklet des Johannes-Evangeliums und seine koranische Bedeutung* (Hg. T. Günzelmansur; Regensburg: Pustet, 2012), 73–207.

[5] Voraussetzung dafür, dass auch die Offenbarung des Johannes zum *Corpus Iohanneum* gerechnet werden konnte, ist die (heute freilich kaum mehr vertretene) Annahme identischer Autorschaft. Dagegen spricht aber, dass die Offenbarung nicht den johanneischen Soziolekt teilt.

[6] Grundlegend: H. Strathmann, „μάρτυς κτλ.“, *TWNT* 4:477–520; J. Beutler, *Martyria. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes* (Frankfurter theologische Studien 10; Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1972).

[7] 1:32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28; 4:39, 44; 5:31, 32 (2x), 33, 36, 37, 39; 7:7; 8:13, 14, 18 (2x); 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26, 27; 18:23, 37; 19:35.

[8] 1:19; 3:11, 32, 33; 5:31, 32, 34, 36; 8:13, 14, 17; 19:35.

Auch wenn die Zeugnisterminologie über das ganze *Evangelium* verteilt ist,[9] ihre pointierte Platzierung einerseits im Prolog (1:7–8, 15), andererseits im Epilog (21:24) fällt auf. Im Prolog ist es *Johannes*, von dem gesagt wird, er sei „zum Zeugnis gekommen, um von dem Licht zu zeugen" (1:7; vgl. V. 8), und V. 15 zitiert sein Zeugnis. Eingerahmt ist dieses sein Zeugnis vom gemeinschaftlichen Bekenntnis eines „Wir": „Der Logos […] zeltete unter uns, und wir haben seine Herrlichkeit geschaut […]" (V. 14). Und: „aus seiner Fülle haben wir alle empfangen – Gnade über Gnade" (V. 16). Hier tun sich diese „Wir" – wie auch immer – mit Johannes zusammen und bestätigen indirekt sein Zeugnis. Im Epilog des Buches ist es der *anonyme Jünger*, „den Jesus liebte", von dem es ganz am Ende heißt: „Dieser ist der Jünger, der *Zeugnis* über dieses *ablegt* und der dies geschrieben hat" (21:24a–c) – und das unmittelbar darauf zu Wort kommende „Wir" bezieht sich jetzt direkt auf diesen Zeugen, um ihn zu beglaubigen und zu autorisieren: „und wir wissen, dass *sein Zeugnis* wahr ist" (V. 24d.e). So lässt sich von einer gezielten literarischen *inclusio* oder Rahmung des Buches durch zwei prominente Zeugen sprechen, *Johannes* und den *Geliebten Jünger*. Diese Rahmung wird noch dadurch unterstrichen, dass sich jeweils ein „Wir" zu Wort meldet, in 1,14 und 21,24.[10]

Beim *1. Johannesbrief* liegen die Dinge ähnlich. Auch hier spielt die Zeugnisterminologie sowohl im Proömium als auch gegen Ende des Schreibens eine wichtige Rolle. Im Proömium begegnet sie in der Parenthese 1:2: „und das Leben ist erschienen, und *wir haben gesehen und bezeugen* (μαρτυροῦμεν) und verkünden euch das ewige Leben, das bei dem Vater war und uns erschienen ist." Wieder meldet sich ein kollektives „Wir" zu Wort, und zwar in einem Satz, der die sich im Proömium vollziehende Kommunikation auf den Punkt bringt: Diese spannt sich von dem in Jesus „erschienenen" „Leben" über dessen Wahrnehmung durch qualifizierte Zeugen („wir haben gesehen") hin zu seiner Bezeugung und Kundgabe vor den angeschriebenen Adressaten.[11] Aufgegriffen und entfaltet wird die semantische Achse des Proömiums im Briefcorpus vom Spitzensatz 1 Joh 4:14: „Und *wir haben geschaut und bezeugen* (μαρτυροῦμεν), dass der Vater den Sohn als Retter der Welt gesandt hat."[12] Danach begegnet die Terminologie erst wieder in 1 Joh 5:5–12, hier zum ersten Mal geballt in

[9] Sie fehlt in Joh 6, 9, 11, 14, 16+17 und 20.

[10] Ein solches „Wir" tritt im Evangelium sonst nur noch in 3:11 auf, dort direkt als Subjekt eines μαρτυρεῖν (vgl. unten den Anhang zum Topos *Sehen und Bezeugen*).

[11] Zur Parenthese wie zur Struktur des Proömiums insgesamt vgl. M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos. Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988), 422–31.

[12] Schnelle, *Johannesbriefe*, 154 (Anm. 2): „Der feierliche Ton, das ‚Wir' sowie die Aufnahme von θεᾶσθαι (‚schauen') und μαρτυρεῖν (‚bezeugen') erinnern an den Prolog 1 Joh 1,1–4."

einem Abschnitt, der dem Briefschluss, 1 Joh 5:13,[13] unmittelbar vorgelagert ist. Jetzt geht es nicht mehr – wie bei den bisher besprochenen Stellen – um das „Zeugnis von *Menschen*“, sondern um das „Zeugnis *Gottes*“ selbst (V. 9b), das er für seinen Sohn bei dessen Taufe (= „Wasser“)[14] und Tod (= „Blut“) bleibend (im Evangelium) hinterlegt.[15] Am Ende mündet die Argumentation in eine Satzfolge ein, die unmittelbar vor dem Briefschluss die Summe zieht: „und dies ist *das Zeugnis*, dass Gott uns ewiges Leben gegeben hat, und dieses Leben ist in seinem Sohn. Wer den Sohn hat, hat das Leben; wer den Sohn Gottes nicht hat, hat das Leben nicht“ (1 Joh 5:11–12).

Fehlt die Zeugnisterminologie im *zweiten* Johannesbrief, so begegnet sie wieder im *dritten* in den Rahmenteilen dieses Schreibens: im „Proömium“[16] V. 3: „denn ich habe mich sehr gefreut, als Brüder kamen und *zeugten* für deine Wahrheit (μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ), nämlich wie du (d. h. Gaius) in Wahrheit wandelst“, sowie am Ende in V. 12 in der Empfehlung für Demetrius: „Demetrius besitzt ein gutes *Zeugnis* von allen (μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων) und von ihr selbst, der Wahrheit, und auch *wir legen Zeugnis ab* (μαρτυροῦμεν), und du weißt, dass *unser Zeugnis* (ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν) wahr ist.“ Zusätzlich begegnet μαρτυρέω noch in V. 6, wo über V. 3 hinaus von einem weiteren guten Leumund für den Briefempfänger die Rede ist: „sie (sc. die Brüder) haben *Zeugnis* für deine Liebe *abgelegt* (ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ) vor der Gemeinde“. Im 3. Johannesbrief geht es demnach überall um ein Zeugnis, das *Christen* zugunsten von *Mitchristen* ablegen – Gaius und Demetrius –, während das *Corpus Iohanneum* sonst die Zeugnisterminologie *christologisch* verwendet. Allenfalls lässt sich Joh 21:24 als Parallele nennen, weil dort das anonyme „Wir“ das Zeugnis des Geliebten Jüngers beglaubigt – allerdings mit einem οἴδαμεν, keinem μαρτυροῦμεν.

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[13] Vgl. oben Anm. 3.

[14] Dies könnte eine Reminiszenz an die Himmelsstimme anlässlich der Taufe Jesu sein, „du bist mein geliebter *Sohn* […]“.

[15] Zum Bezug des Blut-Motivs auf den Tod Jesu (vgl. Joh 18:34) vgl. Klauck, *Der erste Johannesbrief*, 300 (Anm. 3): „Wo immer davon erzählt wird, wie die Lanze des Soldaten die Seite Jesu öffnet und Blut und Wasser herabfließen, erschließt sich unter der Leitung des Geistes die tiefe innere Wahrheit dieses Geschehens“; zuletzt M. J. J. Menken, „‚Three That Testify‘ and ‚the Testimony of God‘ in 1 John 5,6–12“, in *Studies in the Gospel of John and Its Christology* (FS G. van Belle; Hg. J. Verheyden u. a.; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 595–613, 611–12: „Against the secessionists, the author argues that not only ‚the water,‘ that is Jesus’ baptism, but also ‚the blood,‘ that is his death on the cross, show him to be the Christ, the Son of God. This means that his entire ministry, including his death as its climax, is relevant to his identity as God’s envoy“; die Alternative, den Bezug des Blut-Motivs auf das Abendmahl, vertritt Schnelle, *Johannesbriefe*, 172 (Anm. 2).

[16] Schnelle, *Johannesbriefe*, 36 (Anm. 2).

Wir können also festhalten: Die Zeugnisterminologie kommt gezielt am Anfang und Ende von immerhin drei der vier johanneischen Schriften zum Einsatz – an sensiblen Stellen, die wichtig sind, um diese Schriften als *Corpus* für die Rezipienten sichtbar zu machen. Die Beobachtung, dass gerade die *letzte* Schrift, der 3. Johannesbrief, durch ihren profilierten Einsatz der Terminologie in V. 12 den Bogen hin zum Evangelium, besonders 21:24, spannt, verspricht weiteren Aufschluss.

Exkurs: Das *Corpus Iohanneum* und die Johannesoffenbarung

Angesichts der schon zeitigen Vereinnahmung der Johannesoffenbarung für den Apostel Johannes, den mutmaßlich *einen* Autor *aller* johanneischen Schriften,[17] ist bemerkenswert, dass auch dieses Buch im Vorwort und Nachwort markant die Zeugnisterminologie verwendet.[18]

Im Vorwort Apk 1:1–3 dient sie der Charakterisierung der Tätigkeit des Offenbarungsträgers Johannes, die in die Erläuterung des Buchtitels eingebettet ist: „*Offenbarung Jesu Christi*, die Gott ihm (Jesus Christus) gab, um seinen Knechten zu zeigen, was bald geschehen soll, und die er durch

[17] Die Identifikation des „Knechts Gottes" mit Namen Johannes, des Autors der Apokalypse, mit Johannes, Sohn des Zebedäus, dem Apostel, kennt wohl schon Justin, wenn er schreibt: „Ferner hat einer, der bei uns war, Johannes hieß und zu den *Aposteln* Christi gehörte, *in einer Offenbarung prophezeit*, die, welche an unseren Christus glauben, werden in Jerusalem tausend Jahre verbringen, und dann werde für alle ohne Ausnahme die allgemeine und sogenannte ewige Auferstehung und das allgemeine und sogenannte ewige Gericht folgen" (Dial. 81:4); dass Johannes der Autor des vierten Evangeliums ist, sagt er allerdings nicht (umstritten ist ja bis heute, ob Justin das Johannesevangelium überhaupt kannte). – Die Identifikation der beiden bezeugen auch die Johannesakten (ca. 150–160 n. Chr.: H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Apostelakten. Eine Einführung* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005], 32), wenn sie den „Apostel" (wahrscheinlich aus Jerusalem kommend [der erste Teil der Schrift ist verloren]) eine Rundreise durch *die* Städte der Asia (Ephesus, Smyrna und „die übrigen Städte") machen lassen, die in Apk 2–3 einen Himmelsbrief erhalten: vgl. W. Michaelis, *Die apokryphen Schriften zum Neuen Testament* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1956), 224; weitere Zeugnisse bei F.-M. Braun, *Jean le théologien et son évangile dans l'église ancienne* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1959).

[18] Μαρτυρέω begegnet nur 4 Mal, im Vorwort 1:2 und im Nachwort 22:16, 18, 20; μαρτυρία ist breit gestreut: 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10 (2 Mal); 20:4; ebenso μάρτυς: 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 11:3; 17:3. μαρτύριον: 15:5. Zu den sprachlichen Berührungen zwischen Johannesevangelium und Offenbarung vgl. J. Frey, „Erwägungen zum Verhältnis der Johannesapokalypse zu den übrigen Schriften im Corpus Johanneum", Appendix zu M. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 326–429 (389 knapp zur Zeugnisterminologie); außerdem A. Heinze, *Johannesapokalypse und johanneische Schriften* (BWANT 142; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998); J. W. Taeger, *Johannesapokalypse und johanneischer Kreis* (BZNW 51; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988).

Sendung seines Engels seinem Knecht Johannes kundtat (1). Dieser *bezeugte* (ἐμαρτύρησεν) *das Wort Gottes und das Zeugnis Jesu Christi – alles, was er gesehen hat* (ὅσα εἶδεν) (2).“ Wie im *Corpus Iohanneum* begegnet auch hier in V. 2 der Topos „Sehen und Bezeugen“,[19] allerdings nicht (wie im Evangelium und im ersten Brief) bezogen auf *irdische* Wirklichkeiten (wie die Worte und Taten Jesu), sondern auf *himmlische*, die sich Johannes in Visionen erschließen.[20] Inhalt dieser Visionen ist „das Zeugnis Jesu“, das hier und andernorts als sein „Selbstzeugnis“ verstanden wird.[21]

Im Nachwort, Apk 22:6–20, begegnet μαρτυρέω mit Jesus als Subjekt zwei Mal, in V. 16: „Ich, Jesus, habe meinen Engel gesandt, um euch dieses über die Gemeinden zu *bezeugen*“ und in V. 20: „Der dieses *bezeugt*, spricht: Ja, ich komme bald“.[22] In V. 18–19 spricht der Autor: „*Ich bezeuge jedem, der die Worte der Prophetie dieses Buches hört*: Wenn jemand zu diesem [etwas] hinzufügt, wird Gott ihm die Plagen hinzufügen, die in diesem Buch geschrieben sind. Und wenn jemand [etwas] von den Worten des Buches dieser Prophetie wegnimmt, wird Gott seinen Anteil vom Baum des Lebens und von der heiligen Stadt, von denen in diesem Buch geschrieben ist, wegnehmen.“ Diese Warnung steht passend am Ende des Buches: Der Autor richtet seine Worte „an jeden“, der es hört bzw. liest.

Auf die Frage, warum auch in der Johannesoffenbarung die Terminologie bevorzugt an ihren Rändern begegnet, könnte man auf ihren Meta-Charakter verweisen: Mit μαρτυρέω wird die „Offenbarung Jesu Christi“ insgesamt charakterisiert, das Tun ihres Empfängers wie ihr Inhalt. Der Befund könnte auch bei der nachträglichen Identifizierung des Autors der Offenbarung mit dem des Johannesevangeliums samt Briefen eine unterstützende Rolle gespielt haben. Die Terminologie gehört zu den sprachlichen Elementen, die das *Corpus Iohanneum* und die Offenbarung des Johannes miteinander verbinden.

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[19] Zu Recht verweisen Nestle-Aland[28] am Rand auf 1 Joh 1:1–3.

[20] U. B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ÖTK 19; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1984), 68: „In seiner Zeugenfunktion entspricht Johannes jüdisch-apokalyptischen Sehern, die das Gewicht ihrer Aussagen dadurch begründen, dass sie nichts Eigenes sagen, sondern nur Geschautes oder Gehörtes weitergeben (äthHen 103,1–2; auch 98,6; 104,1 […]).“

[21] A. Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (redaktionell bearbeitet von T. Witulski; KEK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 124–25.

[22] Auch dies gehört zu den Rahmenelementen: In Apk 1:5 ist Jesus gleichfalls „der Zeuge“.

II. Schlussfolgerungen aus dem Befund sowie weitere Fragen

(1) Aufgrund der sprachlichen und theologischen Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen dem Johannesevangelium und den drei Johannesbriefen geht die Forschung einhellig davon aus, dass diese vier Schriften literargeschichtlich zusammengehören und aus *einer* „Schule" stammen.[23] Die eben vorgestellten Beobachtungen zur Distribution der Zeugnisterminologie auf die vier Schriften lassen darüber hinaus vermuten, dass sie gezielt zu einem literarischen Korpus zusammengefügt wurden, sich also von einer *Komposition* sprechen lässt.[24]

Das bleibt allerdings eine Hypothese. Denn was die Textgeschichte betrifft, so ist das *Corpus Iohanneum* als solches nirgends in einer Sammelhandschrift, das heißt auf einem Kodex nachweisbar;[25] es gibt auch keine Testimonien, die es bezeugen.[26] Die Überlieferung der *Johannesbriefe*

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[23] R. A. Culpepper, *The Johannine School. An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (SBLDS 26; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975).

[24] T. K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium* (WUNT 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), akzeptiert zwar das Modell „johanneische Schule" (138–44), rechnet aber nicht mit einem *Corpus Iohanneum* (siehe unten Anm. 26). *Die Frage nach internen Signalen, die die vier Schriften miteinander verklammern, stellt er nicht*. Stattdessen meint er den Nachweis dafür führen zu können, dass der Autor des Nachtragskapitels Joh 21 „nicht nur literarisch abhängig vom Lk-Ev und vielleicht auch vom Mt-Ev" ist und überdies „z. T. auch Kenntnisse synoptischen Stoffes bei seinen Lesern voraus(setzt)" (193), sondern auch – über Joh 1–20 hinaus – die „johanneische Überlieferung mit der Person des Petrus für außerjohanneische Überlieferungen öffnet" (206). „Statt die schriftliche Überlieferung auf die Apostel zurückzuführen, wie es das Mt- und das Lk-Ev auf ihre Weise tun, verbürgen nach Joh 21 einzelne Vertraute Jesu die Überlieferungen" (ebd.). Daraus erwächst seine These, dass „die Sammlung mehrerer Evangelien aus der johanneischen Schule entstanden ist" (207). „Der Versuch, die Öffnung der johanneischen Schule als ersten Schritt auf dem Weg zur Vierevangeliensammlung zu deuten, schließt nicht aus, dass undurchsichtige Zufälle und weitere Instanzen mitbeteiligt waren bei der Evangeliensammlung. Doch meine ich, in der johanneischen Schule eine wesentliche Voraussetzung orten zu können, die zur Vierersammlung führt" (206–07).

[25] Zur frühchristlichen Buchproduktion vgl. die erhellenden Ausführungen von M. Wallraff, *Kodex und Kanon. Das Buch im frühen Christentum* (Hans-Lietzmann-Vorlesungen 12; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2013).

[26] Heckel, *Evangelium*, 144 (Anm. 24): „Für eine Sammlung Joh-Ev mit den drei Briefen gibt es keine Testimonien. Die ältesten Zeugnisse über die Joh-Briefe deuten eher darauf hin, dass die Briefe nicht unbestritten zusammengehörig benützt wurden." Die Notiz des Eusebius etwa, „Papias berief sich auch auf Zeugnisse aus dem ersten Johannesbrief und dem ersten Petrusbrief" (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17), die Heckel zur Stützung seines Urteils, es hätte nie ein *Corpus Iohanneum* gegeben (201), heranzieht, schließt aber ein frühes Stadium der Überlieferung eines solchen nicht aus.

mündet in die des sog. *Corpus Catholicum* ein,[27] die Überlieferung des Evangeliums in die des Vier-Evangelien-Kanons. Immerhin besitzen wir mit $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ einen Kodex um 200 n. Chr., der den Text des Johannesevangeliums bezeugt, nicht auch Teile der übrigen Evangelien, jenes freilich *ohne* die Briefe.[28] Die textgeschichtliche Situation ist somit der des lukanischen Doppelwerks vergleichbar,[29] das auch nicht als solches handschriftlich nachweisbar ist.[30]

(2) Über die *diachrone* Reihenfolge der johanneischen Schriften wird viel debattiert, wobei die Sachlage deshalb so komplex ist, weil zur literarischen Aktivität der johanneischen „Schule“ auch die sog. Redaktion des Evangeliums gehört. Das Evangelium als Gemeindebuch unterlag, wie vor

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[27] Allerdings wurden sie erst in einem späteren Stadium in das *Corpus Catholicum* eingegliedert, was unter anderem der $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$ (3./4. Jh.) mit 1./2. Petrusbrief + Judasbrief belegt. („P72 ist für die Katholischen Briefe einer der wichtigsten, um nicht zu sagen der wichtigste Textzeuge“: K. Aland und B. Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982], 103.) Das deutet auf eine zunächst eigenständige Überlieferungsgeschichte der Johannesbriefe hin. Klauck, *Johannesbriefe*, 23 (Anm. 2): „Die Gruppe besteht zunächst nur aus den drei großen Briefen: Jakobusbrief […], erster Petrusbrief […] und erster Johannesbrief […]“; zur aktuellen Diskussion vgl. J. G. van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (London: Routledge, 2007), 78–79; J. M. Lieu, *I, II, III John. A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 25–28; zum *Corpus Catholicum*: D. Nienhuis, „Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon“ (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); außerdem: J.-M. Auwers und H. J. de Jonge, *The Biblical Canons* (BETL 163; Leuven: Peeters, 2003).

[28] „Schon vom äußeren Befund stellte […] $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ etwas bisher noch nicht Dagewesenes, ja für unmöglich Gehaltenes dar. Denn hier lag das Johannesevangelium, von kleineren Beschädigungen am Rande abgesehen, noch wirklich als Buch vor“ (Aland und Aland, *Text*, 97 [Anm. 27]); Wallraff, *Kodex*, 20 (Anm. 26): „das Buch (ist) nicht allzu dick, es umfasste im vollständigen Zustand 73 Blätter, 146 Seiten, war also allenfalls so dick wie ein durchschnittliches Taschenbuch unserer Tage und im Format sogar etwas kleiner. Im Grunde ist hier das Potenzial des Kodex noch bei weitem nicht ausgeschöpft, mit anderen Worten: das Medium ermöglicht (und verlangt bis zum gewissen Grad) größere Zusammenstellungen, um die praktischen und ökonomischen Vorteile ganz auszuspielen. Und das muss wohl auch in der frühen Evangelienüberlieferung die Regel gewesen sein […].“ Zur Evangelienüberlieferung vgl. C. Markschies, „Haupteinleitung“, in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, Bd. I (Hg. idem und J. Schröter; *Evangelien und Verwandtes*, Teilband 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 1–180, 38–47.

[29] G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, I. Teil: *Einleitung. Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,40* (HTKNT V/1; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1980), 76: „Durch das knappe Proömium gibt sich die Apostelgeschichte als Teil eines größeren schriftstellerischen Werks zu erkennen. Der Autor bezieht sich Apg 1,1 auf jenen πρῶτος λόγος, den er dem gleichen Theophilus gewidmet hat (Lk 1,1–4), der nun zu Beginn des Fortsetzungwerkes angeredet wird.“

[30] Ebd., 154–168 („*Textüberlieferung*“); die alten Papyri enthalten zumeist die Apostelgeschichte allein (z. B. $\mathfrak{P}^{8}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{29}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{33}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{38}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{48}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{91}$) oder seltener diese zusammen mit den Katholischen Briefen, das heißt den sog. Praxapostolos ($\mathfrak{P}^{74}$); $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ und $\mathfrak{P}^{53}$ bieten Evangelien + Apostelgeschichte.

allem Zumstein gezeigt hat, einer (mehrfachen) Relecture, die sich literarisch vor allem in den sekundären Abschiedsreden, aber auch im sog. Nachtragskapitel Joh 21 niedergeschlagen hat.[31] Nach verbreiteter Meinung ist dieses Kapitel auch die letzte Spur literarischer Tätigkeit der „johanneischen Schule".[32] Das muss nun revidiert werden: Die *Komposition des Corpus* ist der letzte literarische Akt, der entweder *nach* der Hinzufügung von Joh 21 zum Evangelium oder *gleichzeitig mit ihr* erfolgte.

(3) Den Grundstein für das Korpus hat – so Theißen – der Autor des ersten Briefs gelegt. Dadurch, dass er sich mit ihm an das Evangelium als Basistext der eigenen Gemeinden anlehnt, um diesen autoritativ zu „kommentieren", macht er den Anspruch geltend, dass das Evangelium *nicht* ohne sein Schreiben recht zu verstehen ist.

(4) Ist das Double *Evangelium und Brief* der Grundstein des Korpus, so steht allerdings die Integration der beiden kleinen Briefe in dieses Korpus noch aus. Nun könnte man meinen, dass sie einfach an den großen Brief angehängt wurden, entweder in der Reihenfolge, in der sie entstanden sind, oder nach dem Prinzip ihrer abnehmenden Länge bzw. eines anderen Kriteriums. Doch die Beobachtung, dass 3 Joh 12 am Ende des Korpus einen Bogen zum Schluss des Evangeliums (Joh 21:24) spannt,[33] deutet darauf hin, dass die letzte Schrift des Korpus mit Bedacht an sein Ende gestellt wurde. Deshalb lässt sich aus der kanonischen Abfolge der beiden kleinen Briefe auch nicht auf ihre tatsächliche Entstehungsabfolge schließen. Der 3. Johannesbrief könnte auch älter als der 2. Johannesbrief sein, was freilich kaum entscheidbar ist.[34] Weiterführend ist die Frage, wie die Relation

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[31] J. Zumstein, *Kreative Erinnerung. Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage; ATANT 84; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004); der hier repräsentierte Forschungsstand wird in jüngerer Zeit leider wieder vielfach zurückgenommen, so etwa bei S. Burkhalter, *Die johanneischen Abschiedsreden Jesu. Eine Auslegung von Joh 13–17 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Textstruktur* (Judentum und Christentum 20; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2014); er versucht Joh 13–17 als „literarisches Kunstwerk" zu lesen mit einer absichtsvoll geplanten Konzentrik, die keinerlei Relecture-Prozesse mehr zulässt, nur eine eindimensionale Auslegung.

[32] Vgl. etwa Heckel, *Evangelium*, 202 (Anm. 24): „Da Joh 21 die Argumentationsbasis gegenüber 1 Joh erweitert, dürfte Joh 21 jünger sein als 1 Joh. Joh 21 dürfte nicht nur ein spätes, sondern das letzte Zeugnis der johanneischen Schule sein."

[33] Siehe oben am Ende von Abschnitt 1!

[34] H.-J. Klauck, *Der zweite und der dritte Johannesbrief* (EKK XXIII/2; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1992), 23: „Wenn, wie hier vertreten, ein Autor, der aber nicht mit dem Evangelisten identisch ist, die drei Briefe geschaffen hat, wird für alle drei zutreffen, was für 1 Joh gesagt wurde: Sie sind entstanden, nachdem der Evangelist seine Tätigkeit schon beendet hatte, in der Phase der Endredaktion des Evangeliums, kurz vor dessen endgültiger Herausgabe. Über ihre interne Reihenfolge kann man nicht mehr viel sagen, da die formalen und inhaltlichen Differenzen mehr durch geographische und lokale Gegebenheiten bedingt sind. Vielleicht war 1 Joh aber auch zeitlich gesehen der grundlegende Text, dem 2 Joh und 3 Joh als Behandlung von konkreten Einzelfällen

zwischen 3 Joh 12 und Joh 21:24 in *diachroner* Hinsicht zu beurteilen ist, wie also die Brücke zwischen dem Ende des Evangeliums und dem Ende des *Corpus Iohanneum* zustande kam. Darauf eine Antwort zu finden, verspricht weitere Auskunft über dessen Entstehung (unter 4.). Zunächst sind die Passagen aber für sich zu analysieren (unter 3.).

III. Zur Deutung der „Autorisierungsformeln“ Joh 21:24 und 3 Joh 12

Joh 21:24d.e und 3 Joh 12c–e, aber auch Joh 19:35b–d sind „Autorisierungsformeln“.[35] An allen drei Stellen geht es um das Zeugnis von bzw. für jemanden und die Anerkennung von dessen „Wahrheit“.

Entweder autorisieren *andere* das Zeugnis durch ihr Wissen – so in Joh 21:24 das Zeugnis des Geliebten Jüngers, von dem die Gruppe der „Wir“ sagt: „*Wir* wissen, dass *sein* Zeugnis wahr ist.“

Oder es steht einer *für sich selbst* mit der ihm eigenen Autorität für die Wahrheit seiner Rede ein – so in Joh 19:35 der Geliebte Jünger. Doch auch hier sind es eigentlich *andere*, die für ihn bürgen. Denn die Rede in der dritten Person („*jener* weiß, dass er Wahres spricht“) setzt ja einen „wissenden“ Erzähler voraus – wahrscheinlich jenes „wir“, das sich in Joh 21:24 direkt zu Wort meldet.[36] Dieses „Wir“ würde dann hier schon jenen Zeugen unter dem Kreuz *indirekt beglaubigen.* Neben Joh 20:31 ist es die einzige Stelle im Buch, an der die Leserinnen und Leser direkt vom Erzähler angesprochen werden: „Jener weiß, dass er Wahres spricht, *damit auch ihr* (καὶ ὑμεῖς) *glaubt*.“

3 Joh 12c–e bietet eine dritte Variante: Der „Alte“ autorisiert durch sein Zeugnis einen seiner Vertrauten (Demetrius), wobei er seinem Adressaten Gaius, an den er seine Vertrauensbekundung richtet, indirekt dazu auffordert, sein jenen autorisierendes Zeugnis als glaubwürdiges anzuerkennen: „*du* weißt, dass *unser* Zeugnis wahr ist“ (V. 12d.e), du kannst es also bekräftigen.

Im Folgenden konzentrieren wir uns auf die Deutung von Joh 21:24 und 3 Joh 12.

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folgten, 2 Joh in der Hoffnung, ein Übergreifen des Schismas eben noch verhindern zu können, und etwas früher als 3 Joh, der bereits mit ersten unerwünschten Gegenreaktionen zu kämpfen hat.“

[35] Nach Klauck, ebd., 118.

[36] Zu den unterschiedlichen Auslegungen des ἐκεῖνος vgl. J. Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon Saint Jean (13–21)* (CNT 4b. Deuxième Série; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2007), 259.

Synopse der drei fraglichen Stellen:

Joh 19:35	[vgl. Joh 20:31]	Joh 21:24	3 Joh 12
			a Demetrius wurde Zeugnis abgelegt (μεμαρτύρηται) von allen (ὑπὸ πάντων)
			b und von ihr selbst – der Wahrheit (τῆς ἀληθείας)[37] –,
a Und der (es) gesehen hat, hat (es) bezeugt (μεμαρτύρηκεν),		a Dies ist der Jünger,	c und auch wir (καὶ ἡμεῖς),
		b der dieses bezeugt (ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων)[38]	wir legen Zeugnis ab (μαρτυροῦμεν),
	a Diese Dinge aber sind geschrieben,	c und der dieses geschrieben hat (ὁ γράψας ταῦτα),	
b und wahr ist *sein* Zeugnis,			
c und jener weiß,		d und wir wissen,	d und du weißt,
d dass *er* Wahres spricht,		e dass *sein* Zeugnis wahr ist.	e dass *unser* Zeugnis wahr ist.
e damit auch ihr glaubt.	b damit ihr glaubt,		
	c dass Jesus der Christus ist […].		

1. Zur Deutung von Joh 21:24

Joh 21:24–25, der zweite Buchschluss, beinhaltet zwei relativ selbständige Notizen, von denen hier nur die erste, V. 24, interessiert. Die zweite, V. 25, greift aus der ersten das Stichwort γράψας auf und erklärt, dass es von Jesus eigentlich unendlich viel mehr aufzuschreiben gäbe als das, was

[37] A* scheint τῆς ἐκκλησίας zu lesen, weitere Handschriften ($\mathfrak{P}^{74*vid}$, C) sowie Teile der syrischen Übersetzung verbinden diese Variante mit der wahrscheinlich ursprünglichen Lesart (τῆς) ἀληθείας.

[38] Ein zu Joh 19:35a („der es gesehen hat") paralleles Element fehlt; es ist aber davon auszugehen, dass das Moment der Augenzeugenschaft in Joh 21:24 impliziert ist: Der Geliebte Jünger kann die Jesus-Geschichte bezeugen und hat sie auch nur deshalb niederschreiben können, weil er sie mit eigenen Augen „gesehen" hat. Was Joh 19:35 für die Todesstunde Jesu festhält, gilt Joh 21:24 zufolge für die ganze Jesus-Vita.

„jener Jünger“ tatsächlich aufgeschrieben hat – so viel, „dass die Welt die Bücher nicht fassen könnte“.[39]

Die voranstehende Notiz trifft zwei Aussagen. Die erste, V. 24a–c, stellt fest, dass „der Jünger, den Jesus liebte“, von dem unmittelbar zuvor die Rede war, „dies (alles) bezeugt und es aufgeschrieben hat“ (gemeint ist das mit 21:23 zum Abschluss gekommene Buch insgesamt).[40] Dem fügt V. 24d–e die Autorisierung jenes Jüngers bzw. die seines im Buch niedergelegten „Zeugnisses“ durch ein nicht näher bezeichnetes „Wir“ hinzu.

Die „Wir“ bürgen für die „Wahrheit“, ohne freilich mitzuteilen, worin ihre Bürgschaft gründet bzw. woher sie „wissen“, dass des Geliebten Jüngers „Zeugnis wahr“ ist. Sie sagen auch nicht, in welchem Verhältnis sie zu jenem „Jünger“ stehen. Vielleicht ist das auch gar nicht wichtig, denn es scheint ihnen nicht auf die *Person* des Jüngers anzukommen, sondern nur auf das, was er bezeugt bzw. im Buch schriftlich niedergelegt hat.[41] Deshalb kann der Jünger auch selbst im Buch „bleibend“ gegenwärtig gedacht werden, als Person ist er mit „seinem“ Buch eins.[42] Die aufgeworfene Frage, woher die „Wir“ wissen, dass sein Zeugnis „wahr“ ist, wird deshalb wohl so zu beantworten sein, dass sie es aus ihrer (Glaubens-) Erfahrung *im Umgang mit dem Buch* „wissen“. Sie „wissen“ von seiner Wahrheit, weil sie von der Plausibilität seines Christuszeugnisses aufgrund ihrer eigenen Glaubenserfahrung innerlich überzeugt sind.[43]

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[39] Dazu J. Verheyden, „A Good Way to End a Gospel? A Note in the Margin of John 21,25“, in *Studies in the Gospel of John and Its Christology* (FS G. van Belle; Hg. J. Verheyden u. a.; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 567–93.

[40] Vgl. S. Schreiber, „Die Vita des Königs Jesus. Über die Gattung des Johannesevangeliums“, in *Historiographie und Biographie im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Hg. T. Schmeller; NTOA/SUNT 69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 127–54, 146–47.

[41] Diesem Befund entspricht das hier zugrunde liegende Konzept einer „anonymen Pseudepigraphie“, für das der Name des Zeugen keine Rolle spielt; vgl. M. Theobald, „Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte. Beobachtungen zum narrativen Konzept der johanneischen Redaktion“, in idem, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum* (WUNT 267; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 493–533, 514–16 („Der geliebte Jünger als pseudepigraphisches Argument“).

[42] Zur Frage nach der Bedeutung des μένειν in Joh 21:22–23 vgl. zuletzt Zumstein, *Jean (13–21)*, 315 (Anm. 36): „[…] le disciple bien-aimé demeure (μένειν) présent parmi les croyants jusqu'à la parousie par l'entremise du témoignage écrit qu'il a laissé. L'Ecriture le fait vivre jusqu'à la fin.“

[43] Kennzeichen des johanneischen Glaubensbegriffs ist der Einbezug von „Erkennen“ bzw. (Erfahrungs-)Wissen in den Glauben; vgl. M. Theobald, „Wer ist Jesus für mich persönlich? Identifikationsangebote des Johannesevangeliums“, in idem, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum* (Anm. 41), 671–81, 678–81 („Ein Nachtrag: Glaube aufgrund der Autorität anderer – Glaube aufgrund eigener Erfahrung. Eine Grundstruktur johanneischen Denkens“).

Wer sind diese „Wir“? Beiseite bleiben kann die alte Auskunft, hier sprächen die zwölf Apostel, die für die Glaubwürdigkeit eines aus ihrem Kreis mit Namen Johannes bürgten.[44] Diese Vorstellung ist anachronistisch. Die „Wir“ sind vielmehr *entweder* die hinter dem Evangelium stehende Gemeinde *oder* die für seine Endgestalt verantwortlichen Herausgeber oder Redaktoren, also die „johanneische Schule“ im engeren Sinn. Es liegt nahe, beide Antworten miteinander zu *kombinieren*: Die „Wir“ *sind* die Herausgeber des Buches, aber sie sprechen im Namen der Gemeinde.

Wer sind ihre Adressaten? Für den Fall, dass das durch 1 Joh 2:18–19 belegte Schisma der johanneischen Gemeinden schon vorausgesetzt werden kann, wäre denkbar, dass die Herausgeber die Wahrheit des im Buch niedergelegten „Zeugnisses“ in Abgrenzung von den Schismatikern beteuern mit dem Ziel, den „orthodoxen“ Teil der Gemeinde zu stärken. Dann wäre ihr „Imprimatur“, das sie mit V. 24 unter das Buch setzen,[45] eher *nach innen* gerichtet. Die Alternative wäre, dass der Herausgeberkreis sich am Ende des Buches an alle möglichen Leserinnen und Leser richtet, die Adressaten ihrer beglaubigenden Rede also eher *außen* zu suchen sind. Zugunsten dieser Lösung spricht die Figurenkonstellation von Kap. 21 mit dem Lieblingsjünger als Repräsentanten der *johanneischen* Gemeinden und Petrus als Repräsentanten *aller* Gemeinden, den Jesus anweist, den Weg der johanneischen Gemeinden zu respektieren: „Wenn ich will, dass er bleibt, bis ich komme, *was geht das dich an*!“ (V. 22) Besteht das Ziel von Kap. 21 darin, das Evangelium als Buch, in dem das Zeugnis jenes Jüngers „bleibend“ aufbewahrt ist, als Vermächtnis der johanneischen Gemeinden allen Christen zu empfehlen, dann dürften sich die „Wir“ in V. 24 tatsächlich nach *außen* wenden. Das schließt nicht aus, dass sie – im Sinne der zuerst erwogenen Möglichkeit – das Evangelium auch gegenüber den johanneischen Schismatikern als rechtgläubiges Buch anpreisen, das seinen Weg in die Kirche hinein als solches antreten sollte.

2. Zur Deutung von 3 Joh 12

Mit der Empfehlung für Demetrius, die der Autor des 3. Johannesbriefs – „der Alte“ – in V. 12 am Ende seines kleinen Briefs an seinen Freund und

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[44] So E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (Hg. F. N. Davey; London: Faber and Faber, [2]1947) 147, 559–60. – In eine Legende umgesetzt im Canon Muratori, Z. 10–16: „Das vierte Evangelium, des Johannes, (eines) von den Jüngern. Als ihn seine Mitjünger und Bischöfe aufforderten, sagte er: Fastet mit mir von heute ab drei Tage, und was einem jeden offenbart werden wird, wollen wir einander erzählen. In derselben Nacht wurde dem Andreas (vgl. Joh 1:40), einem der Apostel, offenbart, dass Johannes in seinem Namen, *indem alle (es) überprüfen sollten*, alles niederschreiben sollte.“

[45] B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 641: „[…] it represents the imprimatur of the church in which it originated.“

Schüler Gaius ausspricht, erreicht er sein eigentliches Briefziel: Er möchte, dass dieser den von ihm hochgelobten Demetrius gastfreundlich aufnimmt.[46] Damit verbindet er die Absicht, den innerjohanneischen Zusammenhalt zu stärken. Das liegt ihm auch deswegen so sehr am Herzen, weil die eigenen Missionare offenkundig in fremden Gemeinden Schwierigkeiten ausgesetzt sind. Dafür steht die Person des Diotrephes, über den sich der Autor bitter beklagt. Dieser „liebt es” – so schreibt der Verfasser in V. 9–10 –, „der Erste unter ihnen (d. h. in seiner ἐκκλησία) zu sein (ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων)“, womit er ihn moralisch disqualifiziert (vgl. Mk 10:44[47]). Zieht man diese Wertung ab, dürfte es um „monepiskopale“ Leitungsstrukturen in der Ekklesia des Diotrephes gehen, die im Widerspruch zum eher charismatischen Leitungsmodell der johanneischen Gemeinden stehen. Die im 3. Johannesbrief sich äußernden Spannungen resultieren deshalb nicht aus einem Konflikt um die johanneische Orthodoxie, sondern aus dem Zusammentreffen von Ekklesien mit *Unterschieden* in Herkunft, Tradition und Selbstverständnis. Die Begegnung mit den *Anderen* schürt die Konflikte.

Die Empfehlung V. 12, die hier vorrangig interessiert, ist dreigeteilt: In Adaption des Mehrzeugenrechts von Dtn 19:15[48] nennt sie zugunsten des Demetrius gleich drei Zeugen.[49] Ein gutes Zeugnis stellen ihm *erstens* „alle (πάντες)“ aus, das heißt die Gemeinde des Absenders,[50] in der er einen guten Ruf genießt (V. 12a); *zweitens* „die Wahrheit selbst“, womit gemeint sein dürfte: „sein gesamtes Verhalten zeigt: Er hat die Wahrheit erkannt (vgl. 2 Joh 1), er führt in ihr sein Leben und hat sie sich so zu eigen gemacht“[51] (V. 12b); und *drittens* „auch wir“, also „der Alte“ selbst (V. 12c).[52] Dieses

[46] Sein Brief ist eine Art Empfehlungsschreiben für Demetrius, sein Zweck erschöpft sich darin aber nicht. Vgl. M. Theobald, „Gastfreundschaft im *Corpus Iohanneum*. Zur religiösen Transformation eines kulturellen Grundcodes der Antike“, in *Narrativität und Theologie im Johannesevangelium* (Hg. J. Frey und U. Poplutz; Biblisch-theologische Studien 130; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2012), 171–216, 202–14.

[47] „Wer unter euch *der Erste* (πρῶτος) sein *will*, der soll aller Knecht sein“ (par. Mt 20:27); vgl. auch Mk 9:35. Ob der Autor diese jesuanische Tradition kennt?

[48] „Auf die Aussage von zwei oder drei Zeugen hin soll eine Entscheidung getroffen werden.“

[49] Klauck, *Der zweite und der dritte Johannesbrief*, 118 (Anm. 34): „Adaption juristischer Sprache“.

[50] Wengst, *Der erste, zweite und dritte Brief des Johannes*, 251 (Anm. 2); anders Brown, *Epistles*, 723 (Anm. 2): „all (true) Johannine Christians“.

[51] Wengst, *Der erste, zweite und dritte Brief des Johannes*, 251 (Anm. 2), mit Hinweis auf die ähnliche Formulierung in V. 3 („Ich habe mich nämlich sehr gefreut, als Brüder kamen und für deine Wahrheit Zeugnis ablegten, wie du in der Wahrheit das Leben führst“). „Statt ‚Wahrheit‘ steht in Vers 6 in einer ganz parallelen Ausführung ‚Liebe‘. ‚Seine Wahrheit‘ ist also sein von der Liebe geprägtes Handeln.“

[52] R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (HTKNT XIII/3; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1970), 331; Klauck, *Der zweite und der dritte Johannesbrief*, 118 (Anm. 34) (das Wir = „nachdrückliche Form des Ich“); vgl. bereits A. Harnack, „Über den 3. Johannesbrief“,

dritte und letzte Glied ist durch die angefügte „Autorisierungsformel“: „und du (Gaius) weißt, dass unser Zeugnis wahr ist“ (V. 12d.e) eigens hervorgehoben, was zeigt, dass das persönliche Zeugnis des „Alten“ – Repräsentant und Autoritätsperson der Gemeinde – „für Gaius besonderes Gewicht“ hat.[53] Erst sein Zeugnis verleiht der Empfehlung für Demetrius ihr ganzes Gewicht.

Das Mehrzeugenrecht, dessen sich „der Alte“ bedient, begegnet schon im Evangelium in einer Formulierung, die 3 Joh 12e nahesteht. In Joh 8:17 erklärt Jesus: „Und in eurem Gesetz ist geschrieben, dass *das Zeugnis* (ἡ μαρτυρία) *von zwei Menschen wahr ist* (ἀληθής ἐστιν).“[54] In 3 Joh 12e heißt es, bezogen auf den dritten Zeugen, der zu den obligatorischen zwei noch hinzutritt: „unser *Zeugnis* ist *wahr*“ (*ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθής ἐστιν*).[55] Doch im Unterschied zu Joh 8:17 ist dies hier Teil einer „Autorisierungsformel“. Die „Autorisierung“ – so scheint es – ist aus der Adaption des Mehrzeugenrechts hervorgewachsen, denn das Wissen um die Wahrheit des Zeugnisses, das der Alte bekundet, gründet nicht nur in der Anerkennung seiner eigenen Autorität, sondern im Zusammenspiel der drei Zeugen, die sich gegenseitig stützen.[56] In der Frage nach der diachronen Zuordnung von Joh 21:24 und 3 Joh 12 führt diese Einsicht weiter.

TU 15/3 (1897): 3–27; anders Brown, *Epistles*, 749 (Anm. 2): „and the witness of the Presbyter speaking on behalf of the ‚we‘ of the Johannine School“.

[53] Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe*, 331 (Anm. 52): „[d]ie hervorragende Stellung des ‚Alten‘ erkennen Gajus und seine Freunde an. Auch Demetrius gehört sicher zu diesen treu ergebenen Vertrauensleuten des ‚Alten‘, dürfte aber Gajus persönlich noch nicht bekannt sein.“

[54] Joh 8:17; die Anwendung des Mehrzeugenrechtes in Joh 8:17–18 erscheint paradox: „Ich bin es, der Zeugnis ablegt über mich selbst, und es legt über mich der Vater, der mich gesandt hat, Zeugnis ab.“

[55] Auch Josephus redet in seiner Paraphrase des Mehrzeugenrechts von der „Wahrheit“ des Zeugnisses, weshalb Joh 8:17 und 3 Joh 12e nicht unbedingt auf johanneischen Soziolekt verweisen, sondern von der Sache her empfohlen werden; *A. J.* 4.219: „Ein einziger Zeuge soll nicht gelten, sondern es sollen deren drei sein, deren *Wahrheitsliebe* durch ihren Lebenswandel verbürgt wird“; dazu Beutler, *Martyria*, 220–21, 231–32 (Anm. 6).

[56] Hierzu vgl. Joh 5:32, eine Stelle, die hilft zu verstehen, wie die „Autorisierungsformel“ aus der Adaption des Mehrzeugenrechts hervorgewachsen sein könnte: „ein anderer ist es, der über mich Zeugnis ablegt, und ich weiß, dass es wahr ist, das Zeugnis, das er über mich ablegt.“ Hier ist es der Vater, der den Sohn durch sein Zeugnis autorisiert, wohingegen das „ich weiß“ Jesu auf das göttliche Wissen um jene Autorisierung abhebt. Mit V. 32b.c („ich weiß, dass es wahr ist, das Zeugnis“) vgl. 3 Joh 12d–e.

IV. Zur diachronen Zuordnung der „Autorisierungsformeln“ Joh 19:35; 21:24 und 3 Joh 12

Dass eine Beziehung zwischen den drei Aussagen Joh 19:35; 21:24 und 3 Joh 12 besteht, „leidet keinen Zweifel“, stellt Klauck fest. „Sie sind zusammen entstanden oder einander nachgebildet worden.“[57] Er selbst entscheidet sich dafür, dass der Autor des dritten Briefs Vers 12 in Kenntnis der anderen „Autorisierungsformeln“ gebildet hat.[58] Möglich ist aber auch die umgekehrte Lösung, dass 3 Joh 12 den übrigen Stellen vorausgeht. Dann hätte der Autor von Joh 21 (inklusive der übrigen Lieblingsjüngertexte, die mit Joh 21 in das Evangelium gelangten[59]) Joh 19:35 und 21:24 der „Autorisierungsformel“ des kleinen Briefs V. 12 nachgebildet. Dafür spricht ihre ursprüngliche Einbettung in das Mehrzeugenrecht, aus dem sie der Autor von Joh 19:35 und 21:24 gelöst hat.

Aus dieser These ergeben sich zwei Schlussfolgerungen, eine erste zur Genese des *Corpus Iohanneum* (1), eine zweite zu einem seiner Konstruktionsprinzipien (2).

(1) *Wenn der Autor von Joh 21 den Buchschluss V. 24 in Kenntnis des dritten Johannesbriefs gebildet hat, dann war auch er es (bzw. der Herausgeberkreis), der das Evangelium mit den drei Briefen zu einem Corpus zusammengefügt hat* – so, dass dieses mit der Zeugen-Aussage 3 Joh 12 *endet*, wie auch das Evangelium mit dem Geliebten Jünger als beglaubigtem Zeugen *endet*. Für die kleinen Briefe folgt daraus, dass ihre Abfolge im Korpus (2. Johannes – 3. Johannes) für ihre Deutung nicht auswertbar ist,[60] weil sie auf die Herausgeber zurückgeht und ihre tatsächliche Entstehungsabfolge nicht unbedingt widerspiegeln muss.

(2) Mit dem 3. Johannesbrief steht passend ein Schreiben am Ende des Korpus, das, wie wir gesehen haben, die „Außenbeziehung“ der johanneischen Gemeinden zu Gemeinden anderer Herkunft in den Blick nimmt. Dem korrespondiert das Nachtragskapitel Joh 21 mit seinen Erzählfiguren Petrus und Geliebter Jünger. *Es dürfte eines der Konstruktionsprinzipien des Korpus sein, dieses insgesamt wie besonders seinen Basis-Text am Ende nach außen hin zu öffnen*. Das entspricht der Zielrichtung von Joh 21, das

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[57] Klauck, *Der zweite und der dritte Johannesbrief*, 116 (Anm. 34); er setzt in Klammer hinzu: „z. B. 3 Joh 12 und Joh 21,24 nach dem Muster von Joh 19,35“.

[58] Klauck, *Der zweite und der dritte Johannesbrief*, 118 (Anm. 34): „[…] die Assoziation mit den anderen Autorisierungsformeln scheint dem Autor nicht unwillkommen zu sein. Das von ihm persönlich ausgestellte Zeugnis für Demetrius gewinnt unter der Hand einen besonders feierlichen und autoritativen Charakter.“

[59] Dazu Theobald, *Jünger* (Anm. 41).

[60] Anders Schnelle, *Johannesbriefe*, 14 (Anm. 2), der annimmt, dass 3 Joh 9 („ich habe der Gemeinde geschrieben“) den 2. Johannesbrief meint und voraussetzt.

Buch der ganzen Kirche als das Buch eines Augenzeugen „von Anfang an“ ans Herz zu legen.

Zur Deutung von Joh 21 trägt die Relationsbestimmung zum 3. Johannesbrief möglicherweise auch inhaltlich bei: Wofür das in 21:15–17 dem Petrus zugewiesene „Hirtenamt“ *konkret* steht, ist nach wie vor ein Rätsel.[61] Wenn es stimmt, dass der Leitungsstil des Diotrephes mit „monepiskopalen“ Tendenzen zu tun hat, könnte die Figur des Petrus als des hauptverantwortlichen „Hirten“ seiner Gemeinde (vgl. Eph 4:11; Apg 20:28; 1 Petr 5:2–4) vergleichbare Leitungsstrukturen benachbarter Ekklesien abbilden.[62] Joh 21 würde dann diese indirekt anerkennen, aber im Gegenzug dazu um die Akzeptanz des eigenen Gemeindebuchs und seiner spezifischen „Spiritualität“ und Theologie werben.

V. Die Konstruktionsprinzipien des *Corpus Iohanneum* – ein Resümee

Dem Zusammenhalt des *Corpus Iohanneum* dient – so wurde deutlich – eines seiner wichtigsten Leitmotive, das der μαρτυρία. Es begegnet an den Schaltstellen des Korpus in mehrfacher Variation:

(1) Die Basis des Korpus oder sein Eingangstor ist der *Evangelienprolog*. Ausdrücklich führt er zwar nur Johannes als Zeugen auf, stellt ihm aber in V. 14, 16 (im Stil einer antiken Tragödie) einen „Chor“ zur Seite, der sich in Gestalt eines „Wir“ direkt zu Wort meldet. Diesem strittigen „Wir“ wird man am ehesten gerecht, wenn man es aus der die „Zeit übergreifenden

[61] Vgl. zuletzt T. Schultheiß, *Das Petrusbild im Johannesevangelium* (WUNT 329; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 313, die annimmt, „dass den Weideaufträgen Joh 21,15–17 ursprünglich Leitungsstrukturen auf lokaler Gemeindeebene entsprechen“; zum 3. Johannesbrief führt sie aus: „Dass Widerstand gegen den Monepiskopat speziell seitens der johanneischen Gemeinde erwuchs, ist im Hinblick auf das Modell einer geistgeleiteten Gemeinde zwar eine plausible, aber letztlich nicht zu beweisende These [Anm.: So zu finden bei P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 69–70]. Der Polemik gegen Diotrephes 3 Joh 9–10 ist lediglich zu entnehmen, dass dieser eine gemeindeleitende Position anstrebte (ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν, V. 9), wogegen der πρεσβύτερος augenscheinlich machtlos zu sein scheint. Ferner muss offen bleiben, inwieweit diese Situation in Joh 21 noch in gleicher Weise im Hintergrund steht.“ Schließt Schultheiß Letzteres nicht aus, so scheint mir der oben dargestellte Befund geeignet zu sein, genau dies wahrscheinlich zu machen.

[62] Demgegenüber geht Schultheiß, *Petrusbild*, 314 (Anm. 61), davon aus, dass die johanneischen Gemeinden auf der Ebene von Joh 21 sich „im Rahmen einer krisenhaften Gemeindesituation“ (Tod des Lieblingsjüngers!) selbst diesen Leitungsstrukturen zugewandt hätte – allerdings unter „Maßgabe ihrer christologisch fokussierten Ekklesiologie“.

Perspektive des Prologs“[63] in einer Offenheit und Weite deutet, die vom „Kreis der ersten Zeugen von Andreas bis Thomas“[64] in V. 14 bis zu „uns *allen*“ – den nachgeborenen Glaubenden – in V. 16 reicht. Jede und jeder ist hier eingeladen, in das Bekenntnis der Erstzeugen einzustimmen.[65]

Daran knüpft das *Proömium des 1. Johannesbriefs* an. Es übergeht die Schöpfungstheologie des Prologs, um allein sein Inkarnationsbekenntnis zu rezipieren und neu zuzuspitzen.[66] Dabei konzentriert es das Motiv des „Sehens“ von Joh 1:14 auf die sinnlich-leibliche Wahrnehmung des göttlichen Worts im irdischen Jesus, zeichnet die „Wir“ (im Gegenüber zu den „Ihr“) pointiert als Augenzeugen und unterstreicht damit suggestiv die von den Dissidenten in Zweifel gezogene leibliche Daseinsweise des inkarnierten Logos.[67]

(2) Die zweite Säule des Korpus errichtet das Nachtragskapitel Joh 21 samt zweitem Buchschluss V. 24, der den ersten, Joh 20:30–31, fortschreibt.[68] Über das kollektive „Wir“ der beiden Prologe hinaus präsentiert jetzt das Kapitel eine durch *den Auferweckten selbst* qualifizierte Person – den „Jünger, den er liebte“ – als Kronzeugen *und* Autor des Buches: „Wir

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[63] C. Hoegen-Rohls, *Der nachösterliche Johannes. Die Abschiedsreden als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zum vierten Evangelium* (WUNT 2/84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 266; vgl. insgesamt ihre Ausführungen ebd., 266–74 („‚Wir‘-Aussagen in der Stimme des Prologs“).

[64] U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 40.

[65] Ebd., 41: „In dem bekennenden ‚wir‘ verschränken sich die Zeitebenen. Es wird von den ersten Zeugen und auf der Ebene der joh. Gemeinde zugleich gesprochen, so dass bereits am Anfang des Evangeliums das gesamte Heilsgeschehen und die ganze Gemeinde der Glaubenden präsent sind“; allerdings lassen V. 14/16 eine Stufung erkennen: „Was diesen [sc. den Augenzeugen] gewährt wurde – das Sehen der Herrlichkeit des inkarnierten Logos im Wirken des irdischen Jesus –, das wird auch den Nachgeborenen geschenkt – im Hören und Lesen des Buches, bei dem Jesu Herrlichkeit vor ihrem inneren Auge aufleuchtet“: M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 131.

[66] Klauck, *Johannesbriefe*, 106 (Anm. 2): „Die viel weitere Perspektive von Joh 1,1–18 wird eingeengt auf den Binnenraum der gläubigen Gemeinde hin. Durch die Zeugnisthematik in 1 Joh 1,2 sind aber auch die vom Evangelisten eingetragenen Täuferstücke in Joh 1,6–8.15.19 (vgl. 1 Joh 1,5) gegenwärtig […]“; ebd. nennt er das Proömium „eine äußerst gedrängte, bewusste Anspielung auf den Evangelienprolog und auf weitere evangeliare Inhalte, darunter auch der Evangelienschluss (vgl. das ‚Betasten‘ aus 1 Joh 1,1 mit dem Wunsch des Thomas in Joh 20,25)“.

[67] Dazu passt, dass hier (im Unterschied zum Prolog) nicht von der δόξα des inkarnierten Logos die Rede ist (der Terminus fehlt überhaupt im ersten Johannesbrief).

[68] Diese Fortschreibung trägt die Frage der Verfasserschaft nach, die in Joh 20:30–31 noch keine Rolle spielt. Dort ist der springende Punkt, dass das Buch mit seinem Zeugnis den Glauben der Adressaten stärkt und dieser Glaube das Leben vermittelt; wer es geschrieben hat, spielt dafür keine Rolle.

wissen, dass sein Zeugnis wahr ist", lautet das „Imprimatur" der Herausgeber.

Am Ende des Korpus sagt – an Gaius gerichtet – ganz ähnlich von sich „der Alte (ὁ πρεσβύτερος)": „du weißt, dass *unser* Zeugnis wahr ist" (3 Joh 12). Das führt zur Frage, in welchem Verhältnis „der Alte" und der Geliebte Jünger zueinander stehen. „Der Alte"[69] ist eine *reale* Figur der johanneischen Gemeindegeschichte, der Geliebte Jünger eine stark mit *fiktiven* Momenten ausgestattete Erzählfigur, wozu auch die „pseudepigraphe" Zuschreibung des Buches an ihn gehört. Das schließt nicht aus, dass hinter ihm eine reale Gestalt steht, vielleicht die Gründungsfigur der johanneischen Gemeinden.[70] Wenn die Herausgeber des Korpus in ihrem Buchschluss auf 3 Joh 12 replizieren, bekräftigen sie damit indirekt, dass das authentische Zeugnis des Geliebten Jüngers im Zeugnis anderer, insbesondere dem des „Alten", weiterlebt und so seine Geschichtsmächtigkeit zu erweisen versteht.

(3) In Joh 19:35 verbindet sich die „Autorisierungsformel" mit dem johanneischen Topos der „Augenzeugenschaft", der auch die beiden Prologe prägt.[71] „*Sehen und Bezeugen*" – das gilt der Szene unter dem Kreuz zufolge zuvörderst vom Geliebten Jünger, der als einziger aus dem Kreis der ersten Jünger bis in die Stunde der „Vollendung" bei Jesus bleibt. Wer von dieser Szene wie vom zweiten Buchschluss her auf den Prolog zurück-

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[69] Es dürfte sich „um eine Altersbezeichnung, wenn auch nicht in ausschließlich physischem Sinne, handeln: der Autor war tatsächlich ein alter Mann, hatte als langjähriger Leiter des johanneischen Kreises von seinen Anhängern den Würdenamen ‚der Alte' erhalten und ihn als Selbstbezeichnung übernommen" (P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur. Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter* [Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1978; durchgesehener Nachdruck der Erstauflage 1975], 481). Während „der Alte" selbst nie auf in der Vergangenheit gemachte Erfahrungen verweist, die seine ihm zuerkannte Autorität erklären könnten (die Briefe geben nichts für ein Verständnis des πρεσβύτερος = Traditionsträger „im Sinne des Papias, Irenäus und Clemens Alexandrinus" her: Vielhauer, ebd., 481), ist für die Figur des Geliebten Jüngers die Behauptung seiner Augenzeugenschaft bzw. authentischer Erfahrungen in der Vergangenheit konstitutiv.

[70] Die spätere kirchliche Tradition identifiziert den *inscriptiones* zufolge, die den Briefen in den Majuskeln vorangestellt sind, den „Alten" mit dem Autor des Evangeliums und des großen Briefs (= Apostel Johannes). Zwar passt diese Tradition zum Bild des hochbetagt gestorbenen Lieblingsjüngers (vgl. Joh 21:22–23), aber nicht zur Selbstbezeichnung des Autors als „Presbyter", die „Zweifel an seiner Identität mit dem Apostel Johannes und damit am apostolischen Charakter seiner Schreiben wecken (musste)" (Klauck, *Johannesbriefe*, 25–26 [Anm. 2]). U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (4. neubearbeitete Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 518, meint: „Die Verfasser des Nachtragskapitels legen […] die bei Irenäus zuerst fassbare Schlussfolgerung nahe, dass der Zebedaide Johannes, der Lieblingsjünger des Herrn, zugleich der Autor des 4. Evangeliums sei" (mit Verweis darauf, dass es „kein Zufall sein [dürfte], dass die Zebedaiden Jakobus und Johannes nur in Joh 21,2 erscheinen").

[71] Vgl. im Anhang die Tabelle zum Topos „Sehen und Bezeugen"!

blickt, wird im Kreis derer, die von sich sagen, „wir haben seine Herrlichkeit geschaut“ (V. 14), vor allem ihn wieder finden, den Kronzeugen der johanneischen Tradition „von Anfang an“.[72] So gesehen ist der Prolog tatsächlich die Basis des Korpus – nicht nur, weil der 1. Johannesbrief an ihn anknüpft, sondern auch, weil er mit seiner Sinnoffenheit Raum für die Figur des Geliebten Jüngers lässt. Er ist nach dem Willen der Herausgeber die entscheidende Figur in der johanneischen „Gemeinschaft der Zeugen“.

Anhang:
Der Topos *Sehen und Bezeugen* im *Corpus Iohanneum*[73]

Joh 1:14–16	Joh 3:11	Joh 19:35	1 Joh 1:1–2	1 Joh 4:14
[…] und wir haben seine Herrlichkeit *geschaut* (ἐθεασάμεθα);			[…] was wir *gesehen* haben (ἑωράκαμεν) mit unseren Augen, was wir *geschaut* haben (ἐθεασάμεθα) […]	Und wir (ἡμεῖς) haben *geschaut* (τεθεάμεθα)
			Und das Leben ist erschienen	
	[…] und was wir *gesehen* haben (ἑωράκαμεν),	[…] und der es *gesehen* hat (ὁ ἑωρακώς)	und wir haben (es) *gesehen* (ἑωράκαμεν)	
Johannes legt *Zeugnis* über ihn ab […]	*bezeugen* wir.	*bezeugt* es.	und *bezeugen* (es)	und *bezeugen*,
und aus seiner Fülle haben wir alle empfangen […].				
			und verkündigen euch das ewige Leben,	
			das bei dem Vater war	dass der Vater
			und uns erschienen ist.	den Sohn gesandt hat als Retter der Welt.

[72] Die Redaktion hat dem Geliebten Jünger schon in Joh 1:35–40 Platz gemacht: vgl. Theobald, *Johannes*, 181–83 (Anm. 65) („Exkurs: Der Anonymus von Joh 1“).

[73] Weitere Belege: Joh 3:32; außerhalb des *Corpus Iohanneum*: Apg 4:20; 22:15; 26:16.

The Logos-Concept and Dramatic Irony in the Johannine Prologue and Narrative

Christos Karakolis

"Dramatic irony" as a literary device is not identical with irony in general, and not necessarily connected with ancient Greek drama. In the Gospel of John it involves a deeper understanding of a situation shared by the implied author and the implied readers,[1] as well as a couple of characters (such as Jesus, his mother[2] or John the Baptist), but not shared by other characters (such as the disciples, the Jews, the Pharisees, and the chief priests). It also presupposes the existence of a story in the background of the narrative level, which is already known to the implied author and readers,[3] but not to

[1] The implied readers are qualified and able to adequately understand how the implied author speaks and what he actually means on the level of the narrative, cf. P. D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 34–35. It goes without saying that these categories are not (necessarily) relevant for the true historical author and readership of the gospel.

[2] In the first sign at Cana Jesus' mother betrays a deeper understanding of who Jesus actually is and what he can do, cf. C. K. Karakolis, *Ἡ θεολογικὴ σημασία τῶν θαυμάτων στὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιο* (Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 1997), 106.

[3] Cf. D. W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Theologische Dissertationen 4; Basel: Reinhardt, 1970), 52. In our case this story is introduced to the implied readers right at the beginning, in order that even if they are not aware of the Logos concept and story they become familiarized with them in the story's introduction, so that they are able to follow and understand it. In the Gospel of John there seem to be several categories of possible or probable implied readers (such as members of the Johannine community, members of different Christian communities, followers of John the Baptist, Jewish sympathizers and Jewish adversaries, as well as gentile-Christians or even gentiles). The prologue makes sure that all categories of implied readers share the knowledge that is necessary for following the Gospel's narrative and for finally reaching its aim, which is believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God (20:31). Addressing multiple categories of recipients on different levels of understanding is a fundamental characteristic of dramatic irony, cf. P. Vellacott, *Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 24. The problem of whether πιστεύητε or πιστεύσητε was the original writing (thus Wead, *Devices*, 52) is not important for deciding whether the implied readers are Christian or non-Christian, as the Fourth Gospel applies both usages to both believers and non-believers, see 1:7; 6:29–35; 9:36; 10:38; 11:15, 42; 12:36; 17:21; 19:35.

the characters of the narrative or at least not to all of them. What is more, occasionally the ignorant characters of the narrative unknowingly confirm the preexisting story and even serve the deeper understanding of the situation at hand through their actions and words,[4] while on the conscious level they either genuinely do not understand (as is the case of the disciples and Nicodemus),[5] or they refuse to believe in the truth of the story, and fight against the deeper understanding of their own situation that derives from it (as is the case of the Jewish authorities).[6] J. Resseguie defines dramatic (also termed situational) irony as follows:

> Situational irony depends for its success on an incongruity or contradiction between what a speaker says and what the author intends.[7] Whereas in verbal irony a contradiction or incongruity – shared by both speaker and reader – exists between what is said and what is intended, in situational irony the speaker is naïve about the irony and unaware that he or she is being ironical. Only the author and reader share insight into the irony. … In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, for instance, the audience knows something that Oedipus does not. Oedipus hunts for the person whose actions have caused a plague upon Thebes. Although the audience knows that Oedipus caused the plague by committing incest and patricide, Oedipus himself is unaware that the hunter is the hunted. This form of irony is also called *dramatic irony* because the audience or reader shares knowledge with the author about present or future circumstances of which the character is ignorant.[8]

Many of the ironic aspects of the Fourth Gospel have already been highlighted and elaborated in research.[9] To our knowledge, however, the concept and the story of the Logos have not yet been examined from the concrete point of view of dramatic irony, although they are crucial for its function within the Johannine narrative due to the following reasons:

1. The concept of the Logos as a personal entity does not appear at all within the Johannine narrative, but is exclusively used in the prologue. This means that both the content and the story of Logos are only shared by the

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[4] The most characteristic example in this regard is the saying of Caiaphas in 11:49–52, cf. the relevant analyses by Wead, *Devices*, 53–54 (n. 3); J. L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 70–71; and Duke, *Irony*, 87–89 (n. 1).

[5] See for instance 3:4, 9–10; 4:31–34; 13:27–29; 14:8–9.

[6] See for instance 2:18–21; 5:17–18; 7:33–36; 9:16, 24, 29. Characteristically, in 5:17–18 the Jewish authorities rightly perceive Jesus' claim, but they refuse to believe in him and instead they intend to kill him.

[7] Situational or dramatic irony does not only function on the level of words, but also on the level of actions. Resseguie makes this clear in his further description of the function of this particular kind of irony using the example of Sophocles, *Oedipus tyrannus*.

[8] Resseguie, *Criticism*, 68 (n. 4).

[9] Cf. among others R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 165–80; Wead, *Devices*, esp. 49–68 (n. 3); A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), esp. 33–35.

implied author and the implied readers, but not by the narrative's characters.[10] Thus, the latter remain unaware that Jesus as the Logos is the world's co-creator, as well as that he is the one who reveals God to the world. The existence of such a concept and story known to the audience, but not to the narrative characters is the presupposition *per se* for the function of dramatic irony.[11]

2. Within the Johannine prologue the Greek word λόγος bears a double meaning (*double entendre*).[12] Within the Johannine context it refers to the preexistent and only-begotten Son of God and thus to a divine and personal entity. However, there is also an implicit and at the same time self-evident meaning of the word that any Greek-speaking reader of the prologue would unavoidably gather, namely the one of the spoken word that is spoken by any individual, human or divine.[13] A word and a notion that can be understood in a twofold way is an important tool for the shaping of irony, as well as of dramatic irony in particular,[14] especially when the audience understands both meanings while the narrative characters' understanding is only limited to one of them. In the present paper I will firstly highlight those elements of the prologue's concept and story of the Logos that are instrumental in the function of dramatic irony within the Fourth Gospel. I will then attempt to demonstrate how these elements are interconnected with corresponding elements of the Johannine narrative on the level of dramatic irony using some examples from the story of the healing of the lame man (5:1–18). I will conclude my analysis with the formulation of

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[10] Even narrative characters who share a deeper understanding of Jesus' person and work, such as John the Baptist (cf. C. H. Williams, "John [the Baptist]: The Witness on the Threshold," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John* [ed. S. A. Hunt, D. F. Tolmie, and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 58–60), never use Logos as a title.

[11] Since the prologue's narrative is exclusively addressed to the implied readers of the Gospel (and not to its characters), it is one-dimensional, as opposed to the main gospel narrative that functions on (at least) two levels: the level of the narrative characters (lower level) and the level of the implied readers (upper level), cf. on this distinction D. C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969), 19.

[12] On the use of double meaning as a literary device in John see Wead, *Devices*, 30–46 (n. 3). However, Wead fails to mention Logos as being one of the Johannine terms with a twofold meaning.

[13] I will not enter here the discussion about the possible philosophical background of the term Logos. I am limiting myself to the narrative level of the Gospel, on which I fail to see any philosophical connotation of the word whatsoever, cf. C. Karakolis, "'Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος … Τό ἀποκλειστικά παλαιοδιαθηκικό ὑπόβαθρο, ἡ μετεξέλιξη καί ἡ θεολογική σημασία τοῦ ὅρου 'Λόγος' στό κατά Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιο," in *Ὁ Θεός τῆς Βίβλου καί ὁ Θεός τῶν φιλοσόφων* (ed. S. Zoumboulakis; Athens: Artos Zoes, 2012), 140–62. I also limit my implied readers to those who lack a philosophical background, and therefore read the Gospel exclusively through biblical lenses.

[14] Cf. Wead, *Devices*, 52 (n. 3).

some thoughts concerning the function of dramatic irony within the Johannine narrative on the basis of the Logos-concept, as well as the possible rationale behind its application by the implied author.

I.

Perhaps the most important property of the Johannine Logos is his divinity (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, 1:1).[15] Judging from the position of this statement right at the beginning of the prologue, it is crucial for the understanding not only of the prologue as such, but also of the Gospel as a whole. The Logos' divinity explains his preexistence (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος), as well as his unique relationship with God (ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν).[16] In this regard it is noteworthy that while for instance Matthew and Mark stress Jesus' messianic identity as the most important clue for understanding the true nature of his person and work right from their first verse,[17] in John the messianic title χριστός only appears in 1:17, whereas the often synonymous title υἱὸς (τοῦ) θεοῦ is

[15] Cf. also the *inclusio* in 1:18: μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρός, as well as the confession of Thomas in 20:28: ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.

[16] Apart from 1:1, in the Gospel of John there is no other case, in which πρός + accusative replaces παρά + dative in the sense of static local proximity, according to the interpretation of R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Vol. I (5th ed.; HTKNT IV/1; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1981), 210–11; J. J. Kanagaraj, *"Mysticism" in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background* (JSNTSup 158; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 291–92; U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 31. On the contrary, there are nine cases in which the implied author indeed uses παρά + dative in the sense of local proximity (cf. esp. 8:38; 17:5), while there are also 91 verses in which he uses πρός + dative with a variety of other meanings (cf. LSJ, "πρός," 1497–99), but never with the meaning of static local proximity, a meaning that is indeed witnessed in the koine, although being stylistically clumsy in the light of classical Greek usage. On the basis of these observations the question arises why the implied author chooses only at this point to use the expression πρός + accusative instead of using παρά + dative. One of the effects this usage might have upon the implied readers would be to combine the meaning of a person's continuous movement towards another person in a living relationship (πρός + accusative) with the idea of static continuity (εἰμί). In the theological context of the prologue this would actually mean a combination of the Logos' eternal preexistence and his continuous movement towards God, cf. L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 67, n. 14; F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 42.

[17] As a matter of fact all three Synoptic Gospels begin by presenting Jesus as the awaited Messiah (Matt 1:1; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:32–33), cf. M. D. Hooker, *Beginnings: Keys That Open the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1997), 9–10, 26, 49–50.

used for the first time *expressis verbis* in 1:34.[18] Therefore, since the Johannine narrative begins with a reference to the preexistent and divine Logos, it is in the light of this concept that all christological titles applied to Jesus throughout the Johannine narrative,[19] as well as any other information about him, should actually be understood.[20]

The Logos is instrumental in creating the world. The prologue asserts that nothing exists, which has not been created through him (1:2). In the creation account of Gen 1, on which John 1:1–4 is some kind of a midrash,[21] God practically creates everything through his spoken word: He speaks and thereupon his creation comes into being.[22] The Johannine prologue interprets this account by clearly implying that God's spoken word is actually identical with the divine person of the Logos. In other words, the whole of creation should recognize as its creator, and therefore also as its proprietor, not only God, but also the divine Logos (1:10–11).

According to 1:4, in the Logos "there was life and this life was the light of the human beings." Hartmut Gese considers the categories of life and light as being identical not only in the Johannine prologue, but also in biblical thought as a whole.[23] On this basis, 1:9 should also be interpreted in the same sense. In 1:4 φῶς stands for the creational life specifically given to all human beings as a separate and valuable gift, in contrast to the creation of all other beings (cf. 1:3). In a similar way the word ζωή is normally connected with human beings and never, explicitly at least, with

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[18] In 1:14 there is only an allusion to this title through the use of the word μονογενής, which clearly implies the word υἱός (cf. 1:18; 3:16, 18), cf. Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 1:246–47 (n. 16).

[19] Ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (1:29, 36), υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (explicitly in 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31 and implicitly in 1:14, 18; 3:16–17, 35–36; 5:19–23, 26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1), χριστός-μεσσίας (1:17, 41; 3:28; 4:25–26, 29; 7:31, 41; 9:22; 10:24–25; 11:27; 17:3; 20:31), υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (1:51; 3:13–14; 5:27; 6:27, 52, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31), βασιλεύς (1:49; 12:13, 15; 18:33–39; 19:3, 12, 14–15, 19, 21), κύριος (1:23; 6:23, 68; 9:38; 11:2, 27; 20:18, 20, 25, 28; 21:7, 12 among other references), θεός (1:1, 18; 20:28).

[20] Cf. Hooker, *Beginnings*, 74 (n. 17).

[21] Cf. P. Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," *NTS* 16 (1970): 288–95; cf. also D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 89–111.

[22] See the analysis of K. Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 1 Teilband: *Kapitel 1–10* (TKNT 4/1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 43–44; J. A. Du Rand, "The Creation Motif in the Fourth Gospel: Perspectives on Its Narratological Function within a Jewish Background," in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (ed. G. van Belle, J. G. van der Watt, and P. Maritz; BETL 184; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 39–40; Karakolis, "Ἐν ἀρχῇ," 143–46 (n. 13).

[23] H. Gese, "Der Johannesprolog," in idem, *Zur biblischen Theologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (BEvT 78; Munich: Kaiser, 1977), 191.

the rest of creation.[24] Even in the cases that ζωή refers to the word κόσμος, it seems to be referring, at least primarily, to the human world and not to the created world as a whole.[25] According to the above mentioned, the light (= life) of the Logos becomes the life of all human beings. Thus, the Logos is instrumental not only in the creation of the world as a whole, but also of the human beings in particular.

The light of the Logos could not be overcome by the darkness,[26] which means that the Logos is actually invincible since the darkness has been the dominant element before, and metaphorically speaking even after, creation (cf. 3:19; 12:46). If darkness cannot defeat the light of the Logos, then there is nothing that could defeat him. On the contrary, he is the one being dominant upon the whole of creation, including human beings.

In 1:10–11 there is a noteworthy contrast between the verbs ἦν (1:10) and ἦλθεν (1:11). In the prologue whenever the verb ἦν (= εἰμί in the imperfect signifying temporal duration[27]) has or implies the λόγος as its subject it refers to the Logos as a preexistent and eternal being.[28] This even applies to 1:10. Although here ἦν could theoretically also be referring to the time after the incarnation,[29] in the light of Jesus' request in 17:5 it would rather seem that ἦν actually refers to the time after creation.[30] On the

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[24] C. R. Koester, "What Does It Mean to Be Human? Imagery and the Human Condition in John's Gospel," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (ed. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt, and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 405–06.

[25] Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 188. There is a similar idea of God taking special care for creating the human beings in Gen 2:7, as opposed to the rest of creation that only comes into being through God's spoken word.

[26] Cf. O. Hofius, "Struktur und Gedankengang des Logos-Hymnus in Joh 1,1–18," in idem and H.-Ch. Kammler, *Johannesstudien: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (WUNT 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 17–18; du Rand, "Creation Motif," 40 (n. 22), who interpret κατέλαβεν as overcoming and not as perceiving, due to its immediate context that refers to the creation account of Gen 1; contra Resseguie, *Criticism*, 64–65 (n. 4); Duke, *Irony*, 144 (n. 1), who at this point see a *double entendre*.

[27] Cf. Morris, *John*, 65 (n. 16).

[28] 1:1–2, 9–10, 15. From a certain point of view, this even applies to the usage of ἦν in 1:8, 15. In 1:8 the clause οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς about John the Baptist implies that the Logos was the one who indeed ἦν τὸ φῶς. Furthermore, the first ἦν of 1:15 (οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον) would also seem to be allusively pointing at the Logos's preexistence, especially when combined with the second ἦν of the same verse (ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν).

[29] Cf. Hofius, "Struktur," 19, n. 116 (n. 26); A. T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John* (BNTC 4; London: Continuum, 2005), 101–02.

[30] Contra Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 1:232–33 (n. 16). John 17:5 clearly signifies a change in the status of the Logos after creation and not after incarnation, as D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity/Eerdmans, 1991), 557, concludes based on E. Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (ed. U. Busse; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 502. According

contrary, whenever in the prologue a verb in the aorist is used having λόγος as its subject (1:11, 14, 18) it clearly refers to the Logos' relation with the world after his incarnation. According to the above the Logos never actually left the world after its creation (cf. 5:17).[31] However, although the Logos remained uninterruptedly in the world – even during the time between creation and incarnation – and the world had been created through him, the world as a whole did not recognize him. It is then obvious that even the *asarkos* Logos provided human beings with the possibility of recognizing him, but they did not make use of this offer.[32] Thus, the Logos gives his creation a second chance by paradoxically[33] becoming part of it through his incarnation.

John 1:11 refers to the Logos's incarnation (cf. 1:14).[34] Being the co-creator, the Logos is at the same time also the proprietor of the world,

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to my reading this can only mean that the Logos's sending by the Father to the world occurred right after (or even during) creation, see on this also n. 46. Incarnation is the culmination of this mission, which will end with the incarnate Logos's exaltation and return to his heavenly throne and glory. The divine presence will then continue in the world through the Paraclete, cf. 14:16, 26; 16:7.

[31] In order to refer to the incarnation in 1:10a the evangelist would have to use an expression such as εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἦλθεν instead of ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν. In every case, he would have to use the aorist instead of the imperfect in order to signify a concrete historical moment in history instead of a temporal period of indefinite duration, a problem that R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1: *I–XII* (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 28–29, does not take into consideration in his relevant analysis.

[32] There is more than one way for people to know the Logos. The advantage of using such a polyvalent word means here that whenever God speaks in the Old Testament the Logos is present. God's word is articulated by himself, by the prophets, and by the Torah (in a written form). Apart from this, creation speaks about God all by itself (cf. Ps 19:2), and consequently also about the Logos, through whom (according to Johannine understanding) it has been created. Last but not least, even in the Old Testament epiphanies the Logos is the one who reveals God the Father, as is evident in John 12:41–42, cf. M. Hengel, "Die Schriftauslegung des 4. Evangeliums auf dem Hintergrund der urchristlichen Exegese," *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 4 (1989): 249–88, here 265–66 = idem, *Jesus und die Evangelien: Kleine Schriften V* (WUNT 211; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 601–43, here 619; Carson, *John*, 449–50 (n. 30); Kanagaraj, *"Mysticism,"* 225–26 (n. 16); F. D. Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 736–37; J. Beutler, *Das Johannesevangelium: Kommentar* (Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2013), 370. Cf. however also C. H. Williams, "'He Saw His Glory and Spoke about Him': The Testimony of Isaiah and Johannine Christology," in *Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future: Religious and Biblical Studies in Wales; Essays in Honour of Gareth Lloyd Jones* (ed. R. Pope; Leominster: Gracewing, 2003), 65–75, who interprets 12:41 as referring to Isaiah's proleptic vision of the incarnate Logos' glory.

[33] Cf. Morris, *John*, 82 (n. 16).

[34] Contra M. Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. R. Bauckham and C. Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 279 = idem, *Theologische, historische und*

which therefore belongs to him (τὰ ἴδια). However, although he came to his own, his own did not receive him.[35] The challenge for the implied readers is here to accept the paradox of the creator identifying himself with creation. If they do, then everything that happens in the narrative is unveiled as easily understandable and even potentially or possibly acceptable.[36]

In the expression ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός (1:14) it is the first time in John that the christological title "Son of God" implicitly appears. As both λόγος and μονογενὴς παρὰ πατρός are used in the same sentence referring to Jesus' person, their conceptual connection seems to be crucial not only for the understanding of the prologue, but also of the Johannine narrative as a whole, in which on the one hand υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is continually used as one of its most significant theological terms, while on the other hand λόγος is never again used after the prologue in the sense of a christological title.[37] Since the title "Son of God" normally bears a Jewish-messianic meaning for the characters of the narrative (cf. 1:49), its narrow connection, and perhaps even actual identification, with the Logos-concept provides it with a significant semantic depth. Again, this particular connection is only known to the implied readers of the prologue and not to the characters of the gospel narrative.

The combined use of the terms χάρις and ἀλήθεια in 1:16–17 is of particular interest. On the narrative level, a simple definition of χάρις would be that it is a gift (a favour) not connected with any expectations for a return on the part of the doer.[38] Throughout John the gift of the Logos to the world is life (ζωή).[39] On the other hand, on the narrative surface ἀλήθεια

biographische Skizzen: Kleine Schriften VII (WUNT 253; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 34–61, here 48–49; P. M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading* (JSNTSup 294; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 188. On the other hand, most commentators refer both 1:10 and 11 to the incarnation.

[35] This is a paradox, upon which the two parallel statements of verbal irony in vv. 10 and 11 are based. Ironic statements are often based upon a paradox or a hyperbole; cf. in the case of John 1:10–11 Morris, *John*, 82 (n. 16); M. W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 30. The fact that 1:10–11 are an exaggeration (nobody has accepted the Logos!) compared with the real situation heightens the irony, which is immediately abrogated in 1:12–13.

[36] Cf. Duke, *Irony*, 111 (n. 1).

[37] On the contrary, λόγος in the sense of the spoken word is continually used throughout the narrative, a total of 36 times excluding the 4 references to the Logos in the prologue (1:1, 14). It would then seem that starting with 1:14b the implicit υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ replaces λόγος as a title for the rest of the Gospel. The two terms refer to the same divine person, while belonging to two initially different imageries.

[38] See H. Conzelmann, "χάρις κτλ," *TWNT* 9:365–66; cf. Moloney, *John*, 45 (n. 16).

[39] In John there are 36 occurrences of the noun ζωή and 17 occurrences of the verb ζῆν.

refers to the content of the words (λόγοι) of the Logos.[40] In 1:17 both χάρις and ἀλήθεια are connected with the verb ἐγένετο, which is the verb that expresses the coming-into-being of the world due to God's word both in the Septuagint Genesis creation account[41] and in its Johannine reception (1:3). In this sense, these two terms refer respectively to the new creation, or rather recreation of the world, as well as to the transfer of God's authentic word to the world, or in other words to the recreative and salvific deeds and words of the Logos on behalf of God, his heavenly originator.[42] Furthermore, the juxtapposition of the *passivum divinum* ἐδόθη, with Moses as its mediator, to the middle voice ἐγένετο in connection with Jesus Christ, namely the incarnate Logos, implies a qualitative shift both on the grammatical and the theological level.[43]

John 1:18 is crucial for conceiving the status of the Logos both on earth and in heaven. Despite the Old Testament epiphanies (cf. 12:41), according to 1:18 no one has ever seen God (cf. 3:13). If read along with 1:10 (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν)[44] this statement seems to imply that even the Old Testament epiphanies have actually been manifestations of the *asarkos* Logos.[45] This means that the Logos has been explaining (ἐξηγήσατο) God to the people throughout history, even before his incarnation, by speaking through the prophets and revealing himself in the Old Testament epiphanies. The verb ἐξηγέομαι is used in the aorist in order to denote that God's revelation through the Logos has come to an end after the latter's return to the Father.[46]

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[40] Cf. esp. 8:40, 44–46; 16:7; 17:17. Ἀλήθεια can also signify the person of Jesus, as well as the existential origin, position, or situation of those who believe in Jesus. However, these elaborate semantic and theological extensions of the word's meaning originate from its initial sense as verbal truth, cf. LSJ, "ἀλήθεια," 63.

[41] Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 15, 20, 24, 30.

[42] Throughout the Fourth Gospel Jesus presents himself as performing God's works (4:34; 5:20, 36; 9:3–4; 10:25, 32, 37–38; 14:10–12; 15:24; 17:4) and speaking God's words (3:11, 34; 7:17–18; 8:26, 28, 38, 40; 12:49–50; 14:10).

[43] Cf. M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Aschendorff: Münster, 1988), 258; A. J. Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 47–48.

[44] It is characteristic that in both 1:10 and 17:5 the noun κόσμος is used.

[45] Cf. the relevant analysis in C. Karakolis, "Jesus as Yahweh of the Old Testament Epiphanies," *Deltio Biblikon Meleton* 21/22 (2002/2003): 55–65; cf. also Williams, "He Saw His Glory," 56 (n. 32).

[46] The Logos is again in the Father's bosom, like he used to be before the creation of the world. In this regard it is of significance that in 17:5 Jesus asks the Father to glorify him with the glory that he had before the creation of the world (πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί), and *not* just before the incarnation, cf. n. 30 of the present study.

II.

According to the above analysis, in the prologue the implied readers of the Fourth Gospel receive a plethora of detailed information about the Logos that no character of the Johannine narrative possesses, at least not in this fullness.[47] On the contrary, almost all of the narrative characters, even including Jesus' disciples, are presented as being ignorant about the true nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ, even if they have already reached a certain level of faith in him.[48]

As already mentioned, the Logos-concept itself plays a crucial role in the unfolding of dramatic irony within the Johannine narrative, since it has a double meaning.[49] Every time Jesus, the incarnate Logos speaks, his words are as authoritative and true as the words of God himself (cf. 8:38; 15:15). The divine λόγος speaks the divine λόγους, i.e. the Word of God speaks the words of God. It is dramatically ironical that while on the one hand the implied readers know the real identity of Jesus as the Logos, and are in a position to understand the absolute authority and significance of his words, on the other hand the characters of the narrative are not able and/or willing to do so (cf. for instance 12:37–43). Quite on the contrary, some of them even reach the point of charging Jesus with blasphemy and attempting to seize or/and to kill him.[50]

This may also be an explanation for the omission of the title Logos from the gospel narrative altogether. As we have already seen, this title is a very important key for understanding the Johannine narrative as a whole. If the implied author had given his narrative characters access to this key-term, many aspects of dramatic irony that are based on it would have been immediately resolved. Now, as it is, the mystery of the person, the work and the words of Jesus remain such that, while on the low level of the narrative (downstairs) the characters are unable to grasp them, on the higher level of the narrative (upstairs) the implied readers have only to apply the Logos-

[47] This stage of dramatic irony, in which information is provided to the audience of the narrative in advance, of which the narrative characters are unaware is called "preparation," see W. C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 63–64. While John the Baptist certainly knows a great deal about Jesus' identity, he does not betray any knowledge of the Logos-concept whatsoever, which is a crucial key-term for identifying the earthly Jesus with the preexistent Son of God (1:14). This is also the case with Jesus' mother who seems to understand him more than any of the other people around him (2:5; cf. Karakolis, *Σημασία*, 105–06 [n. 2]).

[48] Cf. the relevant analysis in C. R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 173–76.

[49] Cf. Stibbe, *John*, 16 (n. 35), especially on "paradigmatic readers." Cf. also Wead, *Devices*, 50 (n. 3).

[50] 5:18; 7:1, 19, 20, 25, 30, 32, 44; 8:37, 40, 59; 10:31–33, 36, 39; 11:8, 53, 57.

concept as a hermeneutical key, so as to be able to perceive the true meaning of Jesus' words and works.[51]

As a test-case for the function of dramatic irony within the Johannine narrative on the basis of the Logos-concept, I will now highlight some characteristic narrative elements from the story of the healing of the lame man (5:1–18).

In 5:7 the lame man tells Jesus that he has no one (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω) to get him into the pool when the water is troubled. While the lame man does not have a clue about who Jesus actually is, and seems to just be complaining about his personal situation, the implied readers know from the prologue that Jesus is not simply an ἄνθρωπος but the incarnate Logos.[52] This means that being the co-creator of the whole world the Logos can surely save the desperate lame man.[53] The continuation of the story proves this very fact. The lame man also ignores that Jesus, being the creator of all things – including the water of the pool and himself –, will not have to wait there in order to push him into the water at the right moment to have him healed.[54] Being the Logos he can heal him right now by his powerful and creative word, a conclusion that the implied reader can easily draw based on the prologue, but which the lame man ignores.

In 5:10 the Jews[55] admonish the healed man because he is carrying his bed on a Sabbath. The implied readers are informed by the prologue that

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[51] Cf. G. W. MacRae, "Theology and Irony in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of 20th Century Perspectives* (ed. M. W. G. Stibbe; NTTS 17; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 113.

[52] Cf. 19:5 and the comment of MacRae, "Theology," 111–12 (n. 51).

[53] In fact all signs performed by Jesus symbolically point to the creative and life-giving power of the Logos according to the prologue's witness addressed to the implied readers. Concretely, the transformation of water into wine (2:7–11), as well as the multiplication of the loaves and the fish (6:11–13), are demonstrations of his abundant gift (χάρις) (1:16–17) and divine glory (δόξα) (1:14). The healing of the royal's dying son (4:51–54) and Lazarus' resurrection (11:39–44) are signs of the Logos' life-giving power (1:4). Jesus' walking upon the Sea of Galilee (6:19) reveals his divine power and authority over creation (1:3, 10–11). Lastly, the healings of the lame man (5:8–9) and of the man born blind (9:6–7) are actually life-giving acts to hopeless human beings by regenerating dead parts of their bodies. As opposed to the implied readers, the Jews are not able to correctly interpret these signs, partly also because they are not aware of the Logos-concept of the Gospel's prologue.

[54] Cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Vol. 2 (2d ed.; HTKNT IV/2; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1977), 121.

[55] Most probably this is a reference to the Jewish authorities and not to the Jews as a whole, cf. M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 378. On the Jews at this point as a narrative character cf. T. Nicklas, *Ablösung und Verstrickung: "Juden" und Jüngergestalten als Charaktere der erzählten Welt des Johannesevangeliums und ihre Wirkung auf den impliziten Leser* (RST 60; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), esp. 249–303. Also generally in the present paper I

this admonition is totally out of place. Being the creator of the world along with the Father, the Logos has the self-evident right and power to define whether and in what way the Sabbath should or should not be observed (5:8; cf. 5:17). Moreover, the implied reader knows that there is now a qualitative shift from the law that was given by God through Moses to the grace and truth that became reality through Jesus Christ (1:17), which potentially implies a reinterpretation of the Mosaic law. The lame man indeed participates in this new reality, while the Jews remain blind to it.[56]

In 5:11 the healed man underlines the fact of his healing rather than the violation of the Sabbath-rest. In this way he gives witness to the profound truth that Jesus as the divine Logos has the power to give life even on the Sabbath, since God's life-restoring activity does not cease on the Sabbath,[57] which should already be clear for the implied readers of the prologue (1:4; cf. 5:16–17).[58] However, the healed man does not perceive the full meaning of his "confession," as is evident from the fact that he does not know the identity of his healer (5:13).

On the contrary, in 5:12 the Jews focus upon Jesus' breaking of the Sabbath-rest. In accordance with 5:16 the "Jews," and especially the Jewish authorities, think that they have the power to judge and even condemn Jesus to death (cf. also 5:18; 7:32, 52; 11:53).[59] However, they themselves are actually being tested, judged, and condemned for not believing in the Logos (cf. 3:18; 12:48). In a certain sense, their stance seems to be a verification of the prologue's statement, according to which the Logos has

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understand the Jews of the Johannine narrative not as an historical entity, but as a collective narrative character, cf. R. Zimmermann, "'The Jews': Unreliable Figures or Unreliable Narration?," in Hunt, Tolmie, and Zimmermann, *Character Studies*, 71–109 (n. 10).

[56] Metaphorical blindness on the part of the characters of a story as opposed to its audience is always implied when dramatic irony is at play, cf. D. C. Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic* (2d ed.; The Critical Idiom 13; London: Methuen, 1982), 66–67. Seeing the light as opposed to blindness or, else, being in the darkness is a recurring theme in John, starting with the prologue (1:4, 7–9) and continuing throughout the Johannine narrative (cf. most characteristically 3:19–21; 6:17–19; 8:12; 9:1–41; 10:21; 11:9–10, 37; 12:35–43, 46).

[57] Cf. Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, 271 (n. 30).

[58] As I have already argued above, according to the prologue the Logos is uninterruptedly present in his creation (1:10) and continues his creative work throughout history, for instance by "being the light that gives light" to all human beings who come into the world (1:9; cf. 5:17). Cf. Hengel, "Prologue," 282 (n. 34); Beutler, *Johannesevangelium*, 91 (n. 32).

[59] Accordingly, in the parallel narrative of the healing of the blind man (cf. on the parallelism of the two narratives H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* [HNT 6; 2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 301) the Jewish authorities expressly claim that Jesus cannot possibly be from God because he does not observe the Sabbath-rest, and consequently attribute the blind man's healing directly to God (9:16, 24), cf. Duke, *Irony*, 77 (n. 1).

come to his own people, but his own people did not receive him (1:11). In our story, they refuse to believe in the unprecedented sign that just occurred and focus exclusively upon the breaking of the Sabbath-law without realizing that in this way they actually break the most fundamental article of faith, namely the faith in the one and only true God (Deut 6:4; cf. John 5:18; 8:41). According to the prologue the Logos is God (1:1) or else the "only begotten God" (1:18), which means that the Jews should encounter him with the faith they address to Yahweh in order to observe the law's highest commandment (Exod 20:2–4). Furthermore, the Jews state that the law-breaker is an ἄνθρωπος (5:12), while the implied readers of the prologue know that Jesus is not just a human being, but the preexistent and divine Logos who became a human being (1:14), without of course ceasing to be divine.[60]

In 5:18 the Jews are presented as intending to kill Jesus not only because he broke the Sabbath, but also because he called God his own father, thus making himself equal to God. At this point there is a culmination of dramatic irony: The Jews who belong to the πάντα created by the Father through the Logos (1:3), and who as human beings draw their life from the Logos (1:4), intend to actually kill their creator![61] While they think that they remain faithful to the law that was given through Moses (1:17a), they actually act against the grace and truth that became reality through Jesus Christ (1:17b), and thus also against the spirit of the law (cf. 5:45–47).[62] In other words, by "not receiving" Jesus (cf. 1:11) the Jews abandon their only possibility to have God revealed – or rather explained[63] – to them

[60] It is characterstic that when Jesus uses the absolute ἐγώ εἰμι-sayings in 8:24, 28 (i.e., without a predicate; cf. also 6:20; 13:19; 18:6) the Jews do not realize the implication of such usage. They keep trying to understand Jesus strictly on earthly terms (8:25, 48, 57), while these particular ἐγώ εἰμι-sayings actually refer to his divine identity as the eternal Logos (1:1); see for instance the relevant analysis in Brown, *John*, 1:533–38 (n. 31); Duke, *Irony*, 71, 106–07 (n. 1); cf. also C. H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of 'anî hû' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (WUNT 2/113; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 255–303. Apart from the probable intertextual allusion to the supposed etymology of Yahweh's name (cf. Exod 3:14 and D. E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 84–85), the implied reader could very well add the predicate ὁ λόγος to the expression ἐγώ εἰμι, since in the prologue λόγος is repeatedly connected with the verb εἰμί (1:1–2, 4, 9–10, 18), an information that is not accessible to Jesus' audience.

[61] Whenever Jesus refers directly or indirectly to his preexistence and/or divinity, the Jews think that he is blasphemous and act accordingly by plotting against him (7:1), trying to seize him (7:32, 44; 10:39) or even attempting to stone him (10:31–33).

[62] In the following discourse it becomes evident that Moses speaks in his law about Jesus (5:45–47). Had the Jews really understood the law, they would have believed in Jesus (5:46).

[63] Cf. the use of ἐξηγήσατο in 1:18 and the relevant comment of J. Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (1–12)* (CNT 4/1; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2014), 68.

(1:18), thus also missing the opportunity to believe and consequently to become real children of God (1:12). Having already read the prologue, the implied readers of the Gospel are at this point expected to be able to fully grasp the dramatic irony of the Jews' situation.

III.

On the basis of the above analysis, we can conclude the following with regard to the function of the Logos-concept as a significant constituent of dramatic irony in the Fourth Gospel.

By presenting the implied readers with the Logos-concept right at the beginning of the Gospel and just before the start of the actual narrative (1:19), the implied author challenges them to at least initially accept his claims about the Logos in order for them to be able to decode what will follow in the book (preparation).[64] By reading the prologue the implied readers enter the world, the imagery, and the language of the implied author. They have either to accept them, at least temporarily and to a certain degree, or otherwise abandon reading the book. In a way, they have to allow themselves to be convinced, if not that the content of the prologue is true, at least that they have to follow the implied author's thinking and reasoning by at least temporarily accepting his presuppositions and claims, his point of view. For a non-believing (or not yet fully believing) implied reader, especially a Jewish one[65] – according to 20:31 the Gospel seems to be also addressed to readers who do not yet (or not yet fully) believe[66] – the Johannine Logos-concept contains some elements, which would in

[64] Cf. Phillips, *Prologue*, 54 (n. 34).

[65] On the contrary there could be gentile implied readers who would be able to accept the idea of a dying God in an analogy for instance to the Isis and Osiris story, cf. Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 13–18. Perhaps the main difficulty for gentile readers would be the monotheism of the prologue and the understanding of two divine personal entities as one and the same God (cf. in combination with one another 1:1, 18; 10:30; 17:21; 20:28).

[66] Cf. for the relevant discussion Lincoln, *Truth*, 178–82, esp. nn. 69 and 70 (n. 9). Should we decide in favour of πιστεύσητε over against πιστεύητε in 20:31, then the epilogue of 20:30–31 would seem to be clearly referring to a rather broad spectrum of implied readers, even including non or at least not yet (fully) believing ones, who are urged to believe in order to obtain eternal life, cf. D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered," *JBL* 106 (1987): 639–51; contra among others R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Vol. 3 (HTKNT IV/3; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1975, 403–04; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 2 (AB 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1059–61; Thyen, *Johannesevangelium*, 773–74 (n. 59). Cf. on this problem, however, also my observation in n. 3.

principle be problematic or even unacceptable.[67] However, the introduction of a new understanding of λόγος expressed in a mythical and symbolic language, as well as the overall new and radical ideas of the prologue being conveyed by an omniscient narrator raise the odds of the concept's acceptance even by non-believing implied readers. In this regard the application of dramatic irony throughout the Johannine narrative on the basis of the Logos-concept has a highly persuasive power.[68] Throughout the narrative the implied readers are not expected to identify themselves with the ignorant characters of the narrative, since they already know the truth about the *asarkos* and the incarnate Logos. Quite on the contrary, they are urged to identify themselves with the narrator and the members of his community who received the Logos (1:12), saw his glory (1:14), and eventually became children of God (1:13; 20:17).[69]

Under the aforementioned presupposition that the implied readers accept the Logos-concept, and as a second step at least partially identify themselves with the narrator and his community, they are now in a position to sympathize with the ignorant characters of the narrative who fail to reach their own superior insight.

Sympathy on the part of the audience (observer) towards characters who are trapped within their own ignorance (victims) is an important effect of dramatic irony.[70] In the case of the Fourth Gospel, sympathy on the part of the implied readers should initially concern those narrative characters who in principle have a positive attitude toward Jesus, although they fail to fully understand him, such as Nicodemus.[71] On the contrary, the response

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[67] Especially so the Logos' consideration as a real person, as well as his incarnation, cf. R. Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 40–41; T. R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Ada: Baker, 2008), 256–58.

[68] Cf. Duke, *Irony*, 29–31 (n. 1).

[69] Cf. Phillips, *Prologue*, 52–54 (n. 34). This concerns also those implied readers who being already members of the narrator's community are urged to keep believing in the Logos and his salvific work or even to let their faith grow stronger, cf. N. Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of Their Faith and Understanding* (WUNT 2/290; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 195; Duke, *Irony*, 38–39 (n. 1).

[70] Cf. the case of Oedipus in Sophocles, *Oedipus tyrannus*, and the relevant analysis on sympathy in Greek drama in F. Will, *The Generic Demands of Greek Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), 39–47; cf. also Duke, *Irony*, 41 (n. 1).

[71] On the rather complex narrative character of Nicodemus see R. A. Culpepper, "Nicodemus: The Travail of New Birth," in Hunt, Tolmie, and Zimmermann, *Character Studies*, 249–59 (n. 10).

of the implied readers towards Jews as Jesus' narrative adversaries who are responsible for his death should in principle be enmity.[72]

However, it seems at least plausible, if not probable, that the narrative as a whole has in view also a particular category of implied readers of Jewish identity who have either already converted to Christianity or are considering conversion while reading the Gospel. The response of such implied readers to the unbelief of the narrative Jews could well be sympathy instead of enmity because it should remind them of their own previous unbelief or perhaps current disbelief.[73]

Furthermore, although Jesus' narrative opponents are accused of not believing,[74] on the other hand the narrator also clearly states that from a certain point of view they were not even in a position to do so in the first place, because God himself prevented them from believing.[75] However, from a narrative-critical point of view, non-believing and therefore rejected Jews are not necessarily definitively lost cases.[76] Their rejection could well be considered as a temporary situation, and therefore one with a still open ending.[77] According to such a reading of John's Gospel dramatic

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[72] Cf. A. Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Jews in the Fourth Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 213–27.

[73] As Will, *Demands*, 40 (n. 70), puts it, "… our sympathy with many ancient tragic heroes involves a love which is deepened by our ignorance and uncertainty of their destiny." There are even instances in the narrative when the Jews do believe in Jesus (2:23; 7:31; 8:30–31; 10:42; 11:45; 12:11, 42), albeit their faith is based on his signs, it is temporary or it is not to be altogether trusted (2:24–25). There are also cases, in which certain Jews seem to be very near to acknowledging his messiahship (7:31, 41; cf. 9:22; 12:42). These are instances, in which sympathy towards them on the part of the implied readers could grow even stronger.

[74] 3:12, 18; 5:38, 44, 46–47; 6:36; 8:45–46; 10:25–26; 12:37; 16:9.

[75] Cf. especially 12:39: διὰ τοῦτο *οὐκ ἠδύναντο* πιστεύειν.

[76] See on the so-called Johannine determinism among others R. Bergmeier, *Glaube als Gabe: Religions- und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zum prädestinatianischen Dualismus im vierten Evangelium* (BWANT 112; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), 213–73; O. Hofius, "Erwählung und Bewahrung: Zur Auslegung von Joh 6,37," in *Johannesstudien*, 81–86 (n. 26).

[77] The Hebrew rendering of the inscription on the cross is an ongoing call to the Jews to believe, cf. C. Karakolis, "Χριστός καί '"Ελληνες' στό κατά Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιο: Ἑρμηνευτικές-θεολογικές ἀπόψεις," in idem, *Θέματα ἑρμηνείας καί θεολογίας τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης* (Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 2002), 215–19. The Pauline predestination model of Rom 9–11, according to which the Jews are only temporarily rejected until all gentiles come to faith (see the relevant discussion in M. Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 25–35), would be a precedent in this regard. Furthermore, the commission of the disciples to the world (17:18–23) does not exclude the Jews who definitely remain an organic part of it, cf. the analysis of J. Frey, "Die 'Juden' im Johannesevangelium und die 'Trennung der Wege' zwischen der johanneischen Gemeinde und der Synagoge," in idem, *Studien zu den Johanneischen Schriften*,

irony does indeed have the potential to create sympathy in favour of those narrative characters who – at least presently – do not have any alternative whatsoever, but to remain in their unbelief.

As already mentioned, dramatic irony emphasizes the tension between on the one hand the superior understanding of reality on the part of the implied author, and consequently the implied readers (upstairs), and on the other hand the lack of understanding on the part of the narrative characters (downstairs). This tension can only be resolved by the latters' elevation onto the formers' level of understanding. As a rule, in the Johannine narrative the Jews stay out of this process, since they ultimately fail to recognize and follow the "King of Israel" (cf. 1:29; 19:15). In other words, catharsis with regard to the collective narrative character of the Jews does not take place within the narrative world of the Fourth Gospel itself.[78] However, since the call to faith is continually addressed through the gospel narrative toward the world outside of the narrative, the implied readers could still expect that the Jewish people will finally join the community of believers, even if at present they are still opposing it. If ignorant or even opposing implied readers can read the book at hand that leads to eternal life considering conversion or even finally converting (cf. 20:31), then there is also hope for all their contemporaries to believe and consequently to be granted eternal life. Thus the conversion-perspective and/or the conversion of those implied readers who have not yet embraced faith, would be a model for everyone who follows the call of the glorified Son of God and his community.

According to Resseguie's formulation, an important function of irony, also including dramatic irony, is to "heighten narrative claims in ways that straightforward discourse cannot accomplish."[79] In the above analysis we explored some of the ways, in which knowledge of the prologue's Logos-concept is presupposed in the Johannine narrative, although it is never clearly mentioned *per se*. By providing the implied readers with this crucial hermeneutical key the implied author opens up further possibilities of understanding the narrative in a more complete and multidimensional way. Through the use of dramatic irony, narrative details become significant, convincing, and revealing in a way that would not have been possible without knowledge of the Logos-concept on the part of the implied readers.[80]

Vol. 1: *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten* (ed. J. Schlegel; WUNT 307; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 339–77.

[78] This kind of catharsis, in which the narrative characters finally reach the level of knowledge that already the author and the audience share is also called "resolution," cf. G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (2d ed.; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 39, 248, 261.

[79] Resseguie, *Criticism*, 74 (n. 4).

[80] Cf. on this function of dramatic irony Duke, *Irony*, 37 (n. 1).

However, while in the Easter-stories Jesus' disciples seem to be at last able to understand the real identity of Jesus, dramatic irony does not reach its final stage (resolution) with regard to Jesus' opponents, who in spite of their continuing ignorance and opposition are still invited to believe in him.[81] This means that their story is expected to continue and eventually reach its final conclusion outside of the narrative, namely within the world of the implied readers themselves.[82] Thus, even if Jesus' narrative opponents do not understand the truth about Jesus, it is still possible for their implied counterparts to do so now by listening to the Gospel's call to faith and believing in its Christological witness (20:31).

[81] Cf. n. 78.
[82] Cf. MacRae, "Theology," 108 (n. 51).

Part 2

Reading the Language and Concepts of the Prologue in Their Philosophical Context

Philosophische Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums

Voraussetzungen, Methoden und Perspektiven*

Udo Schnelle

I. Einleitung

Weltweit ist ein eindeutiger Forschungstrend zu erkennen: Immer häufiger und immer intensiver wird die Frage gestellt, wie sich die Autoren/Schriften des Neuen Testaments zu ihren griechisch-römischen Kontexten verhalten.[1] Die alte Frage nach dem Einfluss des Hellenismus auf das Judentum und nachfolgend auf das Christentum lässt sich dabei nicht auf die These reduzieren, alles Hellenistische im frühen Christentum sei durch das hellenistische Judentum vermittelt worden.[2] Es geht auch nicht um die klassische Frage

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* Der Vortragsstil wurde beibehalten; ebenso die englischen Übersetzungen bzw. *summaries*, die eine Hilfe für nichtdeutsche Muttersprachler sein sollen.

[1] Vgl. z. B. J. P. Sampley (Hg.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003); T. Engberg-Pedersen (Hg.), *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); idem, *Cosmology & Self in the Apostle Paul. The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); G. H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); M. D. Lidwa, *We Are Being Transformed. Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (BZNW 187; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2012); S. Vollenweider, „‚Mitten auf dem Areopag'. Überlegungen zu den Schnittstellen zwischen antiker Philosophie und Neuem Testament", *Early Christianity* 3 (2012): 296–320. Vgl. ferner die Textbände des *Neuen Wettstein*: II/1.2: *Briefliteratur* (Hg. G. Strecker und U. Schnelle; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter), 1996; I/2: *Texte zum Johannesevangelium* (Hg. U. Schnelle, M. Labahn und M. Lang; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2001); I/1.1: *Texte zum Markusevangelium* (Hg. U. Schnelle, M. Labahn und M. Lang; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2008); I/1.2: *Texte zum Matthäusevangelium (Matthäus 1–10)* (Hg. U. Schnelle und M. Lang; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2013). Angekündigt ist: *Brill's Ancient Philosophical Commentary on the Pauline Writings*; Series Editor: G. van Kooten.

[2] So noch M. Hengel, „Das früheste Christentum als eine jüdische messianische und universalistische Bewegung", *TBei* 28 (1997): 197–210, hier 198 (= idem, *Judaica, Hellenistica et Christiana. Kleine Schriften II* [WUNT 109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], 200–18, hier 202): „Was an ‚paganen Einflüssen' im Urchristentum vermutet wurde, kann durchweg auf jüdische Vermittlung zurückgehen. Nirgendwo läßt sich eine direkte

nach der Umwelt des Neuen Testaments und den damit verbundenen traditions- und religionsgeschichtlichen Fragen. Vielmehr: Partizipieren die neutestamentlichen Autoren aktiv an gemeinantiken Diskursen? Nehmen sie bewusst Schlüsselbegriffe der antiken Philosophie auf und integrieren sie in ihre Argumentation? Versuchen sie so gezielt Anschlussfähigkeit herzustellen? Zur Debatte stehen also nicht passive Vorgänge wie traditions- bzw. religionsgeschichtliche Beeinflussungen, sondern aktive Prozesse: Die Übernahme philosophischer Begriffe und Ideen, die Integration philosophischer Themen in die eigene Argumentation, die Teilnahme an umfassenden philosophisch-theologischen Diskursen.

Are the authors of the New Testament deliberately participating in the general discourses of antiquity? Do they intentionally pick up key concepts and integrate them into their argumentation? Are they intentionally trying to establish a connection? Not only passive processes like tradition- and religio-historical influences should be considered, but active procedures also: adoption of philosophical concepts and notions, integration of philosophical subjects into domestic argumentations, participation in the general philosophical-theological discourses.

Damit ist nicht beabsichtigt, die neutestamentlichen Autoren zu Philosophen zu machen; das waren sie definitiv nicht. Es geht auch nicht um eine Alternative ‚griechisch-römisch vs. jüdisch', denn Autoren wie Philo, Josephus oder Justus von Tiberias[3] zeigen, dass es eine solche Entgegensetzung nie gab und sie als unhistorisch zu bezeichnen ist. Vielmehr ist eine Öffnung der Fragestellungen beabsichtigt, für die es zahlreiche Gründe gibt.

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bleibende Beeinflussung durch heidnische Kulte oder nichtjüdisches Denken nachweisen. Was man im Neuen Testament gemeinhin als ‚hellenistisch' bezeichnet, stammt in der Regel aus jüdischen Quellen, die sich freilich der ‚religiösen Koine' der hellenistischen Zeit weder entziehen wollten noch konnten." Treffend S. Alkier, *Wunder und Wirklichkeit in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus* (WUNT 134; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 72, in Bezug auf Paulus: „Die Alternative, Paulusbriefe ‚jüdisch' oder ‚hellenistisch' zu lesen, wird vollends brüchig, wenn bedacht wird, daß Texte sich nicht nur der intertextuellen Kompetenz ihrer Verfasser und ihrer Leser, sondern einer allgemeinen, kulturbedingten enzyklopädischen Kompetenz verdanken. Jede Textherstellung und jede Textlektüre muß auf eine Enzyklopädie kulturell konventionalisierten Wissens zurückgreifen. Die kulturellen Zusammenhänge, in denen frühchristliche Texte und insbesondere die paulinischen Briefe entstanden sind, lassen sich dabei nicht in eine jüdische und eine griechisch-römische Kultur sezieren."

[3] Zur Platorezeption bei Philo von Alexandrien, Josephus und Justus von Tiberias vgl. G. H. van Kooten, „The ‚True Light Which Enlightens Everyone' (John 1:9). John, Genesis, the Platonic Notion of the ‚True, Noetic Light', and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*", in idem (Hg.), *The Creation of Heaven and Earth* (Themes in Biblical Narrative 8; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 149–94, hier 153–75.

II. Voraussetzungen

Welche historischen und hermeneutischen Gründe legen es nahe, nach dem philosophischen Gehalt der johanneischen Theologie zu fragen? Zumindest fünf Gründe lassen sich anführen:

1. Theologie als Philosophie/Philosophie als Theologie

In der Antike gehörten um die Zeitenwende herum Philosophie und Theologie zusammen und wurden als konkrete Lebensformen verstanden; philosophische und religiöse Themen durchdrangen sich und wurden keineswegs als getrennte Wissensformen im neuzeitlichen Sinn wahrgenommen.[4] Jede Philosophie hatte religiöses Potenzial und umgekehrt jede Religion auch philosophisches Potenzial,[5] zumal es vor allem der Philosoph ist, „der mit seinem Verstand (λόγῳ) vielleicht am wahrsten und vollkommensten das Wesen des Göttlichen erklärt und verkündet".[6] Gott und gelingendes Leben sind zentrale Themen antiker Philosophie[7] und Theologie. Philosophen wirkten nicht nur im Bereich des privaten oder öffentlichen Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen, sondern traten zumeist mit einem öffentlichen Anspruch auf, der alle Bereiche des Lebens einschließlich der Politik umfasste.[8]

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[4] Vgl. dazu P. Hadot, *Philosophie als Lebensform* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005); H. Niehues-Pröbsting, *Die antike Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004), 142–219; H. Flashar und W. Görler, „Einleitung", in *Die Philosophie in der Antike*, Bd. 4/1: *Die hellenistische Philosophie* (Hg. H. Flashar; Basel: Schwabe, 1994), 7: „Mit dem Wegfall des natürlichen Schutzes der Polis (Kulte, gegenseitige Amtspflichten aller Bürger) erfuhr der einzelne das Gefühl der Hilflosigkeit, der seelischen Einsamkeit. Es entstand ein ganz neues Bedürfnis nach Rat und Trost, dem sich die Philosophie gegenübersah, von der erwartet wurde, dass sie dem Individuum, das den Rückhalt in der Polis verloren hatte, den Weg zum Glück in allen Lebenslagen auch des Alltags aufzeige."

[5] Alle großen Denker im zeitlichen Umfeld des Neuen Testaments waren Theo-logen (z. B. Cicero, Philo, Seneca, Epiktet, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostomus). Dies ist nicht verwunderlich, denn jedes bedeutende System der griechisch-römischen Philosophie gipfelt in einer Theo-logie; vgl. hier W. Jaeger, *Die Theologie der frühen griechischen Denker* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964); W. Weischedel, *Der Gott der Philosophen*, Bd. I (München: dtv, ^{2}1985), 39–69; H. Verweyen, *Philosophie und Theologie. Vom Mythos zum Logos zum Mythos* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 39–127.

[6] Dio Chrysostomus, *Or. 12*, 47.

[7] Für Epiktet vgl. U. Schnelle, „Paulus und Epiktet – zwei ethische Modelle", in *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ* (Hg. F. W. Horn und R. Zimmermann; WUNT 238; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 137–58.

[8] Vgl. J. Hahn, *Der Philosoph und die Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1989), 55: „Der Philosoph – ob als Lehrer (διδάσκαλος), jedermanns Erzieher (κοινὸς παιδευτής), Pädagoge (παιδαγωγός), Leiter (καθηγητής), Führer (ἡγεμών) oder Steuermann (κυβερνήτης) bezeichnet und verstanden – sollte Antworten auf das Bedürfnis seiner Umgebung nach Selbstbestimmung und Orientierung, nach Zielvorgabe und Sinnstiftung geben können."

Versteht man die populären Hauptströmungen der antiken Philosophie im Umfeld des Neuen Testaments (Stoa/Kynismus, Epikureer, Platoniker) als konkrete Lebensformen und nicht – wie zumeist – als Theorieunternehmen, eröffnen sich zahlreiche thematische und praktische Konvergenzen.

In antiquity philosophy and theology belong together and were not seen primarily as a theoretical business but as concrete forms of life. Philosophical and religious themes permeated each other and were not seen as opposites in a modern sense. Every philosophy has religious potential and every religion has philosophical potential, because the philosopher is the one, "who by means of reasons interprets and proclaims the divine nature, most truly, perhaps, and most perfectly" (Dio Chrysostom). Understanding the popular mainstream of ancient philosophy in the context of the New Testament (Stoa/Cynics, Epicureans, Platonists) as concrete forms of life opens up numerous thematic and practical convergences.

Weil ein sittliches Leben gleichbedeutend mit Philosophie ist und die Philosophie handeln lehrt,[9] sind Einsicht in das Gute und das Tun des Guten zwei Seiten derselben Medaille. Als Lebensform und Technik des Glücklichseins, als Wissenschaft vom Leben[10] kommt es der Philosophie darauf an, die im Menschen vorhandenen Tugenden zu wecken bzw. die Einsicht des Menschen zu fördern, sich an diesen Tugenden zu orientieren. „Überhaupt ist der Mensch als das einzige aller irdischen Wesen ein Abbild Gottes und hat ihm ähnliche Tugenden. Denn auch an den Göttern können wir nichts Besseres denken als Einsicht, Gerechtigkeit, Tapferkeit und weise Mäßigung (φρονήσεως καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἔτι δὲ ἀνδρείας καὶ σωφροσύνης)."[11] Philosophie ist befreiende Lebensunterweisung, die Kunst, durch

[9] Vgl. Cicero, *Fin*. 3.4: „Philosophie ist ja die Wissenschaft vom Leben." Cicero bietet in *Fin. 3* eine eindrucksvolle Gesamtdarstellung stoischer Ethik, deren Grundgedanke lautet: „Das höchste Gut besteht darin, im Leben das Wissen um die natürlichen Gegebenheiten anzuwenden, indem man sich für das entscheidet, was naturgemäß ist, und das verwirft, was ihr zuwiderläuft, das heißt in Harmonie und Übereinstimmung mit der Natur zu leben" (*Fin*. 3.31); vgl. *Nat. deor.* 1.7: „Wenn also alle Vorschriften der Philosophie auf das praktische Leben zielen …"; Seneca, *Ep*. 20:2: „handeln lehrt die Philosophie, nicht reden"; *Ep*. 94:39: „Ist die Philosophie nicht das Gesetz der Lebensführung?"; Musonius, *Diss*. 3, wonach nicht nur die Männer danach suchen sollen, „wie sie ein sittliches Leben führen, was gleichbedeutend mit Philosophie ist"; vgl. idem, *Diss*. 7, wonach der Philosoph eine Aufgabe hat: „zu wissen, was zur Glückseligkeit oder zum Unglück des Menschen führt."

[10] Vgl. dazu P. Rabbow, *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (München: Kösel, 1954); I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 13; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1969).

[11] Musonius, *Diss*. 17.

Einsicht und Übung die im Menschen schlummernde Tugend zu aktivieren.[12] Weil der Philosoph als Exemplum und Lehrer der *ars vitae* gilt, müssen das beanspruchte Ethos (ἔθος) und die tatsächliche Lebensführung (βίος) übereinstimmen. Auch in der entstehenden christlichen Theologie geht es um ein gelingendes Leben in Übereinstimmung mit dem Willen Gottes. Es gilt, nach der höchsten Tugend zu streben: dem Glauben; im heiligen Geist Anteil zu erhalten an der göttlichen Welt. Es kommt darauf an, sich dem Guten und nicht dem Bösen zuzuwenden und seine Triebe zu beherrschen.

Ein Vergleich mit philosophisch-theologischen Denkern des 1./2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. wie Seneca, Plutarch, Dio von Prusa oder Epiktet zeigt, dass insbesondere Paulus und Johannes ihnen gegenüber auch in denkerischer Kraft in nichts zurückstehen. Zwar waren neutestamentliche Autoren wie Paulus oder Johannes zweifellos auch nach antiken Kategorien keine Philosophen, aber ihre Theologie weist eine *denkerische Kraft* auf. Sie zeigt sich vor allem in der Umsetzung von religiösen Erfahrungen und Überzeugungen, die Systemqualität gewinnen mussten, bevor sie eine solche Wirkungsgeschichte entwickeln konnten. Um etablierte Deutesysteme abzulösen, müssen sich neue Denkmodelle und Überzeugungen im Kontext konkurrierender Systeme und der maßgeblichen kulturell-religiösen Diskurse behaupten und bewähren sowie über Anschlussfähigkeit, Plausibilität und überraschende Momente verfügen. All das trifft für neutestamentliche Autoren – vor allem Paulus und Johannes – zu, und deshalb sollte ihre Theologie auch als bedeutende Denkleistung gewürdigt werden.[13] Der nachhaltige Erfolg des Christentums hängt wesentlich auch damit zusammen, dass seine Lehre emotional und intellektuell attraktiv war und plausible Antworten auf drängende Lebensfragen von Menschen geben konnte. Es ist also eine zweifache Öffnung im Hinblick auf den literarischen Charakter der neutestamentlichen Schriften und ihre Einordnung in bereits bestehende Diskurse der antiken Umwelt notwendig, um so die Wahrnehmung und die Wirkung der neuen Bewegung der Christen besser erfassen zu können.

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[12] Vgl. auch Iamblichus, *Prot.* 13:1–2: „Wenn einer das Ziel, das er anstrebt, erreicht hat und vollkommen beherrscht, sei es die Beredsamkeit oder Wissenschaft oder Körperkraft, so muss er das im Sinne des Guten und der Gesetze ausüben. … So wie ein Mensch, der eine dieser Fähigkeiten beherrscht, vollkommen gut wird, wenn er sie zum Guten verwendet, so wird einer, der sie zum Schlechten verwendet, völlig schlecht"; Übersetzung: G. Luck, *Weisheit der Hunde. Texte der antiken Kyniker* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1997), 50.

[13] Es ist mehr als ein Zufall, dass in jüngerer Zeit gerade Philosophen Paulus neu entdecken; vgl. J. Taubes, *Die Politische Theologie des Paulus* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2003); A. Badiou, *Paulus. Die Begründung des Universalismus* (München: Sequenzia, 2002); G. Agamben, *Die Zeit, die bleibt. Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006).

2. Die Bildung der neutestamentlichen Autoren

Dafür ist die Frage nach der Bildung der neutestamentlichen Autoren unumgänglich. Gehören sie nicht überwiegend der Unterschicht an und verfügen über eine nur geringe Bildung, so dass ein Vergleich mit der Philosophie von vornherein unsinnig ist? Hier zeichnet sich zumindest für Paulus ein bemerkenswerter Umschwung ab. Während noch vor nicht allzu langer Zeit Paulus zur sozialen und bildungsmäßigen Unterschicht gezählt wurde, mehren sich aktuell die Stimmen, die dezidiert von einer gehobenen Bildung des Paulus sprechen: „Hinsichtlich Herkunft und Ausbildung wurde in dieser Untersuchung als wahrscheinlich angesehen, daß Paulus als Sohn eines römischen Bürgers in seiner Heimatstadt eine literarische Ausbildung in ihrer allgemeinen griechisch-hellenistischen Form erhielt, daß er bei einem Redelehrer die Progymnasmata durchlief und daß er sich mit philosophischer Lehre und philosophischem Ethos vertraut gemacht hatte.“[14] Zutreffend betont T. Vegge, dass Paulus nicht nur in der Lage war, traditionelle Briefkonventionen eigenständig abzuwandeln, sondern auch innerhalb der Briefe gekonnt rhetorisch zu argumentieren. Für die Gestaltung solch komplexer Texteinheiten war eine literarische Ausbildung unabdingbar: „Die Erstellung eines abgeschlossenen und hinsichtlich Disposition und Stil durchgearbeiteten Textes setzte eine gründliche Ausbildung in Grammatik- und Rhetorikschule voraus. Die Qualität der paulinischen Texte belegt folglich die solide allgemeine literarische Ausbildung, die Vertrautheit mit Form und Inhalt der rhetorischen und philosophischen Rede ihres Autors.“[15] Auch die in den Paulusbriefen benutzten Begriffe und Bilder aus dem Geschäftsleben zeigen deutlich, dass Paulus ein städtisch geprägter Handwerker war, der andere ausbildete und auf jeden Fall zur Mittelschicht zu rechnen war.[16] Obwohl Johannes als historische Person nicht so zugänglich ist wie Paulus, lässt sich auch für ihn Ähnliches sagen: Die durchdachte und sorgfältige Komposition des 4. Evangeliums, seine einprägsame Sprache und die Bilder und Symbole aus allen Lebensbereichen (Wein, Geburt/Wiedergeburt, Wasser, Brot, Licht/Sehen, Tod/Leben/

[14] T. Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen. Schule und Bildung des Paulus* (BZNW 134; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2006), 494. Vgl. auch Th. J. Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie* (WUNT 276; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 386, der im Hinblick auf den Galaterbrief betont, „dass der Verfasser des Briefes über grundlegende Kenntnisse in der antiken Rhetorik und Epistolographie verfügte, die er durch eine höhere Schulbildung erworben hat“.

[15] Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen*, 423 (Anm. 14).

[16] Vgl. P. Arzt-Grabner, „Gott als verlässlicher Käufer. Einige Papyrologische Anmerkungen und bibeltheologische Schlussfolgerungen zum Gottesbild der Paulusbriefe“, *NTS* 57 (2011): 392–414.

ewiges Leben) sprechen deutlich für eine gehobene Bildung. Vor allem die Aufnahme eindeutig auch philosophisch konnotierter Begriffe (Logos, Wahrheit, Geist, Gnade, Freimut, Zeichen) weisen Johannes als jemanden aus, der bewusst mit den Bildungstraditionen seiner Zeit arbeitete und in ihnen lebte. Dasselbe gilt für Markus, Matthäus und Lukas, aber auch für den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes. Die meisten neutestamentlichen Autoren verfügten über eine beachtliche Bildung, denn sie schufen nicht nur neue Gattungen, sondern mussten ein völlig neues religiöses Denkgebäude errichten.

The sophisticated and elaborate composition of the Fourth Gospel, its memorable language, and the images from every sphere of life (vine, birth/rebirth, water, bread, light/seeing, death/life/eternal life) are indicators of a high level of education. In particular the adoption of notions, that are explicitly philosophically connoted (*logos*, truth, spirit/*pneuma*, grace, frankness, signs/*semeia*) distinguishes John as somebody who intentionally faces the educational tradition of his time and is part of it. The same applies to Mark, Matthew and Luke, but also to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Most of the authors of the New Testament had access to a considerable level of education, because they not only established new genres of literature, but also had to elaborate a completely new edifice of religious ideas.

3. Die Stellung der neutestamentlichen Schriften in der antiken Literaturgeschichte

Nicht nur die Einschätzung des Bildungsstandes der neutestamentlichen Autoren, sondern auch die Stellung der neutestamentlichen Literatur in der antiken Literaturgeschichte bedarf einer grundlegenden Revision! Dies gilt sowohl für die Paulusbriefe als auch für die Evangelien. Nach wie vor von Einfluss sind die Entwürfe von Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) und Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976).[17] Vor allem Dibelius klassifizierte das Neue Testament als volkstümliche nichtliterarische Kleinliteratur, die überwiegend von anonymen unteren Schichten getragen wurde.[18] Die Texte des Neuen

[17] Vgl. M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971 = 1919); M. Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (TB 58; München: Kaiser, 1975 = 1926); R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (FRLANT 29; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970 = 1921).

[18] Vgl. Dibelius, *Formgeschichte*, 2 (Anm. 17): „Die urchristliche Literatur hat sich aus privaten Niederschriften bis an die Grenze der großen Literatur entwickelt; nur zwei oder drei ihrer Texte gehören in die Nähe eines Philon oder Josephus. Alles übrige ist nichtliterarisch oder Klein-Literatur. Diese Entwicklung verläuft ohne direkte Fühlung mit der großen Literatur." Bultmann übernimmt diese Sicht und will den Evangelien keine literarische Gattungsqualität zusprechen. So gilt: „Mk ist eben noch nicht in dem Maße Herr über den Stoff geworden, daß er eine Gliederung wagen könnte" (Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 375 [Anm. 17]), und alle Evangelisten verfügen „nicht über die für die hohe Literatur ausgebildete Kompositionstechnik" (a.a.O., 397). Diesem Konzept verhaftet bleiben Ph. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin/New York: De

Testaments wurden von Dibelius und Bultmann als Binnenliteratur betrachtet, die faktisch nur für den Gebrauch in den eigenen Zirkeln bestimmt waren. Bestimmend für diese Sicht war der Vergleich mit der klassischen attischen Literatursprache eines Thukydides, Xenophon, Isokrates, Demosthenes, Lysias und mit deren Nachahmern, die Eduard Norden als ‚Kunstprosa' klassifiziert hatte.[19] Dieser Vergleich ist allerdings problematisch, denn nicht die Literatur des 5. oder 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. sollte der Ausgangspunkt sein, sondern allein die Literatur zur Zeit des Neuen Testaments. Autoren wie Philo, Josephus, Seneca, Epiktet, Plutarch und Dio von Prusa sind dann der Vergleichspunkt. Zudem: Bedeuten stilistische Unterschiede zu diesen Autoren oder zur ‚Hochliteratur' zwangsläufig, dass die Briefe eines Paulus oder das Markusevangelium keine wirkliche literarische Qualität besitzen?[20]

Dass Paulus über sprachliche, rhetorische und denkerische Kompetenzen verfügte, wird heute nicht mehr ernsthaft bestritten.[21] Die Form des Briefes hat seit Epikur[22] ihren festen Platz in der philosophisch-theologischen Unterweisung, die auf Erkenntnis, Selbsterkenntnis und Verhaltensänderung abzielt. Seneca als unmittelbarer Zeitgenosse des Paulus zeigt mit seinen *Epistulae morales*, wie populär diese Form war. Die *Epistulae morales* „literarisieren den Brief und machen diese Gattung als ‚Dialog mit einem Abwesenden' oder ‚halbierten Dialog' zu einem Instrument philosophischer Erziehung und Selbsterziehung".[23] Auf Erkenntnis und Beeinflussung zielen auch die Paulusbriefe; durch aufeinander abgestimmte und

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Gruyter, 1975); G. Theißen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), 349: „Das Neue Testament ist *Kleinliteratur*, d. h. Literatur literaturferner Kreise, aber sie lässt sich nicht allein als Ausdruck literaturferner Unterschichten erklären."

[19] Vgl. E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* (2 Bde.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1898).

[20] Vgl. Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie*, 93 (Anm. 14).

[21] Vgl. Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie*, 404–05 (Anm. 14), wonach eine Analyse des Philemon- und des Galaterbriefs ergibt, „dass diese einerseits an der allgemeinen epistolaren Formelsprache partizipieren, wie sie in den Papyrusbriefen gebildeter wie ungebildeter Verfasser präsent ist, sich andererseits von den Briefen Ungebildeter in ihrer kultivierten Alltagssprache deutlich unterscheiden und durch eine sorgfältige formale Gestaltung und Rückgriffe auf rhetorische Techniken sogar literarischen Briefen annähern können."

[22] Vgl. hier besonders den *Brief an Menoikeus* als Sachparallele; zu den beachtlichen Parallelen zwischen Epikur und Paulus vgl. P. Eckstein, *Gemeinde, Brief und Heilsbotschaft. Ein phänomenologischer Vergleich zwischen Paulus und Epikur* (HBS 42; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2004).

[23] M. v. Albrecht, *Wort und Wandlung. Senecas Lebenskunst* (Mnemosyne. Supplementum 252; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2; vgl. ferner E. Hachmann, *Die Führung des Lesers in Senecas Epistulae morales* (Orbis antiquus 34; Münster: Aschendorff, 1995).

ineinandergreifende Argumentationsgänge sollen Verstehensformen erschlossen und Verhaltensnormen eingeübt werden.[24] Eine Schrift wie der Römerbrief mit seiner mitreißenden Argumentation, seiner kunstvollen Disposition, der Fülle der behandelten Themen, dem hohen Anteil völlig neuer Gedanken und seiner wirkungsgeschichtlichen Kraft kann es mit jedem Brief Senecas oder jeder Kunstrede eines Dio aufnehmen.

Auch die Evangelien sind keineswegs der ‚Kleinliteratur' zuzuordnen, sondern sie verfügen über eine hohe literarische Qualität.[25] Sie zeigt sich in einem hochkomplexen literarischen und theologischen Gesamtplan, einem überlegten Aufbau, der durchdachten Textabfolge innerhalb der Unterabschnitte, der zahlreichen sprachlichen und inhaltlichen Vernetzungen innerhalb des Gesamtwerkes, den behandelten theologischen, ethischen, anthropologischen Themen und schließlich in der Schaffung und Ausformung der neuen Literaturgattung ‚Evangelium' selbst: Sie ist ein höchst kreativer Akt innerhalb der antiken Literaturgeschichte. Die Evangelien sind der gehobenen antiken Erzählliteratur zuzuordnen, in der religiöse, philosophische, ethische und kulturgeschichtliche Themen behandelt werden (vgl. vor allem Plutarch). Für das Johannesevangelium ist all dies evident, das zudem eine höchst kreative Bildwelt entwickelt.

The Gospels are not "*Kleinliteratur*" or literature of minor value at all. On the contrary, they possess a high literary quality. This is characterized by a carefully considered composition; the sophisticated arrangement of texts in the subsections; the numerous links of language and content within the Gospels; the addressed theological, ethical and anthropological subjects; and finally the conception and realization of the new established genre "Gospel/*Euangelion*" itself. The Gospels should be considered as a kind of higher ancient narrative literature which is concerned with religious, philosophical, ethical, and cultural-

[24] Zur Briefform und Briefanalyse vgl. auch A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, [4]1923); O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (BWANT 58; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); J. L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (FF; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); F. Schnider und W. Stenger, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular* (NTTS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1987); H.-J. Klauck, *Die antike Briefliteratur und das Neue Testament* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998); S. E. Porter (Hg.), *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Pauline Studies 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010); Th. J. Bauer, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie* (Anm. 14); L. Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography* (WUNT 298; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Chr. Hoegen-Rohls, *Zwischen Augenblickskorrespondenz und Ewigkeitstexten. Eine Einführung in die paulinische Epistolographie* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 135; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2013).

[25] Zur Literaturgattung Evangelium vgl. R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); D. Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie* (TANZ 22; Tübingen: Francke, 1997); D. Dormeyer, *Das Markusevangelium als Idealbiographie von Jesus Christus, dem Nazarener* (SBB 43; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999); D. Wördemann, *Das Charakterbild im bíos nach Plutarch und das Christusbild im Evangelium nach Markus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

historical topics (cf. most notably Plutarch). For the Gospel of John all this is evident and furthermore it develops a particular creative imagery.

4. Die Paulus- und Johannesschule

Wo und wie vollzogen sich diese Deutungsleistungen und Sinnbildungen? Waren sie rein individuelle Leistungen, oder gibt es Hinweise darauf, dass Paulus und Johannes ihre Theologie im Rahmen einer Schule entwickelten?[26] Zunächst muss aber geklärt werden, was antike Schulen auszeichnet, um sie dann (kurz) mit Paulus und Johannes zu vergleichen.

Als Kennzeichen antiker Schulen können idealtypisch gelten:[27] 1) Zurückführung auf einen anerkannten Lehrer/Stifter,[28] z. B. auf Pythagoras, Sokrates, Platon, Diogenes oder Epikur. 2) Ein Korpus anerkannter Lehrsätze; bei Epikur z. B. die ‚anerkannten Lehrsätze'. 3) Exegese der Schriften oder Überlieferungen des Schulgründers.[29] 4) Die Bildung von Traditionen und die Sukzession von Nachfolgern/Schülern, die sich wiederum auf den Stifter zurückbeziehen, wobei es einen oder mehrere Nachfolger geben kann. 5) Mit der Zugehörigkeit zu einer Schule verbindet sich Loyalität, was besonders deutlich bei den Epikureern ausgeprägt war. 6) Die Verehrung des Stifters bekommt religiöse Züge, deutlich erkennbar bei den Kynikern (Diogenes) und den Epikureern. 7) Besonders für die Epikureer, Stoiker und Kyniker ist ein starker Praxisbezug kennzeichnend. Es geht um die Umsetzung im alltäglichen Lebensvollzug, denn nicht die Lehre, sondern allein ihre Realisierung im Lebenswandel ist entscheidend.[30] Selbst-

[26] Vgl. hier umfassend U. Schnelle, „Denkender Glaube. Schulen im Neuen Testament", in *Von Rom nach Bagdad* (Hg. P. Gemeinhardt und S. Günther; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 81–110.

[27] Diogenes Laertius nennt in seinem oben teilweise zitierten Abschnitt über die Einteilung der Philosophie vier Kennzeichen antiker Richtungen/Schulen: „So weit also die Anfänge (ἀρχαί) der Philosophie, ihre Sukzessionslinien (διαδοχαί), ihre Teile (μέρη) und Richtungen (αἱρέσεις)" (Diogenes Laertius 1.20). Zu den Kennzeichen antiker Schulen vgl. ferner J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); D. T. Runia, „Philo of Alexandria and the Greek Hairesis-Model", *VC* 53 (1999): 117–47.

[28] Klassisch Diogenes Laertius 1.13–15, 18; 2.47: Sokrates als Vater zahlreicher philosophischer Schulen. Epikur sagt über den Weisen: „Er wird eine Schule gründen, aber nicht für den Massenunterricht; auch wird er auf Bitten öffentliche Vorträge halten. Er wird feste Lehrmeinungen (δογματιεῖν) und keine Erkenntniszweifel haben" (Diogenes Laertius 10.120b).

[29] Vgl. hierzu W. Kullmann and J. Althoff, *Vermittlung und Tradierung von Wissen in der griechischen Kultur* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993).

[30] Vgl. dazu exemplarisch Epiktet, *Ench.* 46: „Nenne dich niemals einen Philosophen und sprich unter Ungebildeten auch möglichst nicht über die philosophischen Lehrsätze, sondern handle danach"; ferner *Diss.* 4.1.112–114: „Sieh dir alles genau an und reiße es aus deinem Herzen. Reinige deine Urteile und prüfe, ob du dich nicht an etwas gehängt hast, das dir nicht gehört, und ob dir nicht etwas angewachsen ist, das dir nur unter

einsicht, Selbstbeobachtung und vor allem ständige Übung sind somit unabdingbare Voraussetzungen für das Gelingen eines solch anspruchsvollen Unternehmens: ein authentisches Leben in Freiheit. Dieser letzte Punkt ist von großer Bedeutung: Schulen waren in hellenistischer Zeit nicht nur Denk-, sondern vor allem Lebensgemeinschaften. Hier liegen große Gemeinsamkeiten mit dem Neuen Testament, die bisher noch nicht wirklich gesehen wurden. Der Begriff der ‚Schule' umfasst also Traditionszusammenhänge im Sinn einer geistigen Prägung, sie ist aber immer auch zugleich eine Lebens- und Organisationsform und ein soziales Gebilde.

Die Existenz einer Paulus- und einer Johannesschule wird vielfach angenommen. Die Argumente für eine Paulusschule können nur kurz genannt werden:[31] 1) Bereits Lukas bezeugt eine Paulusschule. In Apg 24:5 (Paulus vor Felix) wird Paulus als „Anführer der Richtung/Schule der Nazarener" (πρωτοστάτην τε τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἱρέσεως) bezeichnet. Schulgründer ist der Nazarener, sein Nachfolger heißt Paulus. Lukas bezeichnet die Bewegung der Christen (Apg 11:26: Χριστιανοί = „Christianer")[32] als ‚neuen Weg' (Apg 19:23; vgl. 24:22) und macht Paulus zu ihrem Anführer. 2) Auch der Lebens- und Ausbildungsweg des Apostels lässt auf eine Paulusschule schließen. Paulus durchlief selbst eine Schultradition,[33] die ihn zeitlebens prägte, nämlich als Pharisäer (vgl. Apg 22:3; Gal 1:13–14), und später wurde er in Antiochia in die Grundlagen des christlichen Glaubens

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Schmerzen wieder abgerissen werden kann. Und während du täglich trainierst wie auf dem Sportplatz, sag nicht, du philosophierst – ein wirklich hochtrabendes Wort –, sondern dass du deine Freilassung betreibst. Denn das ist die wahre Freiheit. So wurde Diogenes von Antisthenes befreit und stellte daraufhin fest, dass er von niemandem mehr geknechtet werden könne."

[31] Von einer ‚Paulusschule' spricht meines Wissens erstmals H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe, kritisch und exegetisch behandelt* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1880), 117; vgl. ferner H. Conzelmann, „Paulus und die Weisheit", in idem, *Theologie als Schriftauslegung* (BEvT 65; München: Kaiser, 1974), 177–90; H. Ludwig, *Der Verfasser des Kolosserbriefes. Ein Schüler des Paulus* (Diss. theol., Göttingen 1974), 201–29; H. Conzelmann, „Die Schule des Paulus", in *Theologia Crucis – Signum Crucis* (Hg. C. Andresen und G. Klein; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979), 85–96; A. Standhartinger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte und Intention des Kolosserbriefes* (NovTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–10, 277–89; Schnelle, „Denkender Glaube", 88–102 (Anm. 26).

[32] Formal handelt es sich bei Χριστιανοί um einen gräzisierten Latinismus; vgl. F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and F. Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), § 5.

[33] Philo, *Spec.* 2.61–62, verbindet das Arbeitsverbot am Sabbat mit der Aufforderung, sich an diesem Tag mit der Philosophie zu beschäftigen: „Es stehen nämlich an den Sabbaten in allen Städten zahllose Lehrhäuser der Einsicht, der Besonnenheit, der Tapferkeit, der Gerechtigkeit und den anderen Tugenden offen." Zum zeitgenössischen jüdischen Unterrichtswesen vgl. S. Safrai, „Education and the Study of the Torah", in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Hg. S. Safrai und M. Stern; CRINT I/2; Assen/Amsterdam: van Gorcum, 1976), 945–70.

eingeführt. In 1Kor 11:23a; 15:3a betont er die Bedeutung frühchristlicher Traditionen für sein eigenes Denken. 4) Die Deuteropaulinen (Kolosser-, Epheser-, 2. Thessalonicherbrief, Pastoralbriefe)[34] sind nicht nur ein deutliches Zeugnis dafür, dass es zumindest nach dem Tod des Apostels eine Paulusschule gab, die sein Erbe unter veränderten Bedingungen zu wahren suchte. Sind die Deuteropaulinen aber auch ein Indiz für die Existenz einer Paulusschule zu Lebzeiten des Apostels? Die bereits erwähnte Mitverfasserschaft von Schülern bei den Briefen ist meines Erachtens ein deutlicher Hinweis darauf, dass z. B. Timotheus nicht erst nach dem Tod des Apostels theologisch aktiv wurde. Weil bereits die Protopaulinen unter Mitwirkung von Mitarbeitern entstanden, konnten die Schüler mit Recht die Autorität des Paulus auch nach seinem Tod in Anspruch nehmen, indem sie dessen Gedanken aufnahmen, weiterentwickelten, mündliche Paulustraditionen in die Briefe integrierten[35] und der aktuellen Gemeindesituation entsprechend eigene Argumentationsgänge einbrachten. Die Existenz einer Schule zu Lebzeiten des Apostels ist eine wesentliche Voraussetzung für die Rezeption der Deuteropaulinen.

Anders als bei Paulus ist die johanneische Theologie nicht von einer Einzelperson geprägt, sondern von Anfang an ein Gruppenphänomen.[36] Weder der Presbyter Johannes als Verfasser der beiden kleinen Johannesbriefe noch der (oder die) Verfasser des 1. Johannesbriefes und der Evangelist Johannes lassen sich wirklich historisch fassen. Dass jedoch alle einer gemeinsamen Denktradition, und das heißt der johanneischen Schule, angehörten, zeigt deutlich die gemeinsame Lebens-, Sprach- und Denkwelt auf, die auf eine johanneische Schule hinweisen: 1) Zahlreiche zentrale gemeinsame theologische Einsichten; 2) Gemeinsamkeiten in der Sprache; 3) deutlich belegt das ‚wir' in Joh 21 die Existenz einer johanneischen

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[34] P. Müller, *Anfänge der Paulusschule* (ATANT 74; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1988), 270–320; M. Frenschkowski, „Pseudepigraphie und Paulusschule", in *Das Ende des Paulus* (Hg. F. W. Horn; BZNW 106; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2001), 239–72, beschränken das Phänomen der Paulusschule auf die Deuteropaulinen.

[35] Vgl. dazu Standhartinger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte und Intention des Kolosserbriefes*, 91–152 (Anm. 31).

[36] Zur johanneischen Schule vgl. R. A. Culpepper, *The Johannine School* (SBLDS 26; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975); R. E. Brown, *Ringen um die Gemeinde* (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1982; engl. Original: *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* [Mahwah: Paulist, 1979]); O. Cullmann, *Der johanneische Kreis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975); G. Strecker, „Die Anfänge der johanneischen Schule", *NTS* 32 (1986): 31–47; U. Schnelle, „Die johanneische Schule", in *Bilanz und Perspektiven gegenwärtiger Auslegung des Neuen Testaments* (Hg. F. W. Horn; BZNW 75; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1995), 198–217. Kritisch zur Existenz einer johanneischen Schule äußern sich W. Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe* (BZNW 64; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1992), 208–14; C. Cebulj, „Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe", in *Schulen im Neuen Testament?* (Hg. Th. Schmeller; HBS 30; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2001), 254–342.

Schule; 4) auch die ethischen Aussagen[37] in den Briefen und im Evangelium sprechen für die Existenz einer johanneischen Schule; ferner 5) die Darstellung Jesu als ‚Lehrer';[38] und schließlich lassen 6) zumindest der 2./3. Johannesbrief eine vergleichbare Gemeindestruktur erkennen;[39] Wandermissionare verkehren zwischen Hausgemeinden/Ortsgemeinden, sie werden aufgenommen und für die weitere Verkündigung ausgerüstet. Der Konflikt zwischen dem Presbyter und Diotrephes zeigt eine Störung dieses Systems an. Während Gaius den Wandermissionaren des Presbyters die notwendige Unterstützung erteilte, nahm Diotrephes diese Missionare nicht auf und hinderte auch andere daran, dies zu tun (3 Joh 10). Ursache oder Begleiterscheinung dieser Auseinandersetzung ist ein Lehrkonflikt um die reale Fleischwerdung Jesu Christi (2 Joh 7), der auch im 1. Johannesbrief (vgl. 1 Joh 2:22; 4:1–3; 5:6–8) und im Johannesevangelium (vgl. Joh 1:14; 6:51c–58; 19:34–35; 20:24–29) deutliche Spuren hinterlassen hat.

Insgesamt lässt sich die johanneische Schule soziologisch als Gemeindeverband charakterisieren, der als *spirituell-theologische Gemeinschaft* im letzten Drittel des 1. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. eine eigene Sprach- und Denkwelt entwickelte und ein theologisches Programm vertrat, das neben der paulinischen und synoptischen Tradition zur dritten Hauptströmung des frühen Christentums wurde. Der *Sitz der johanneischen Schule* dürfte ebenfalls *Ephesus* gewesen sein.[40] In und um Ephesus herum gab es verschiedene johanneische Gemeinden (vgl. 2./3. Johannesbrief), wobei die Hauptgemeinde in der Stadt Ephesus angesiedelt war. Die theologischen Übereinstimmungen zwischen der paulinischen und der johanneischen Theologie weisen zudem darauf hin, dass es in Ephesus zu einer traditionsgeschichtlichen Verbindung zwischen diesen beiden Hauptströmungen neutestamentlicher Theologie gekommen sein dürfte.[41]

Die paulinische und die johanneische Schule waren höchst kreative Erscheinungen der antiken Religions- und Bildungsgeschichte. Sie trugen

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[37] Vgl. dazu U. Schnelle, *Die Johannesbriefe* (THKNT 17; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010), 162–67.

[38] Vgl. Culpepper, *Johannine School*, 273–75 (Anm. 36).

[39] Vgl. dazu D. Rusam, *Gemeinschaft der Kinder Gottes* (BWANT 133; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993), 210–28.

[40] Vgl. R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1982), 102–03; G. Strecker, *Die Johannesbriefe* (KEK 14; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 27; J. W. Taeger, *Johannesapokalypse und johanneischer Kreis* (BZNW 51; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988), 22; M. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 302 u. ö.; S. van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus* (NovTSup 83; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

[41] Vgl. dazu U. Schnelle, „Paulus und Johannes", *EvT* 47 (1987): 212–28; R. Schnackenburg, „Ephesus. Entwicklung einer Gemeinde von Paulus zu Johannes," *BZ* 35 (1991): 41–64.

nicht nur wesentlich dazu bei, das frühe Christentum in einem attraktiven religiösen Umfeld als eigenständige Bewegung zu begründen. Die Arbeit innerhalb der paulinischen und der johanneischen Schule dürfte sich vor allem auf folgende Bereiche bezogen haben: a) Schriftstudium (vor allem Septuaginta-Zitate); b) Pflege und Weitergabe frühchristlicher Traditionen; c) Diskussion und Lösung zahlreicher Probleme im Kontext der neuen Identitätsbildung (z. B. Tod/ewiges Leben, Stellung zur Thora, Beschneidung, Sabbat, Verhältnis zur paganen Umwelt und zum römischen Staat, Sexualethik, Sklavenfrage, Verhältnis zum Staat, Reich – Arm, Organisation der Gemeinden); d) Ausbildung einer eigenen theologischen Sprache (z. B. ‚in Christus', Betonung des Glaubens und der Sünde als Unheilsmacht, Jesus Christus als Logos, Paraklet) und damit verbunden e) die Entwicklung eigener umfassender theologischer Vorstellungs- und Symbolwelten. In diesem Kontext stellten sich auch die entscheidenden Fragen: Wie ist Gott zu denken? Wie bekommt der Mensch Anteil an göttlicher Erkenntnis und Lebensfülle? Welchem ethischen Kodex sollen Menschen folgen?

Parallels with the ancient philosophical schools and indications within the writings themselves suggest that the Pauline and Johannine writings were not purely individual achievements but the work of a Pauline and a Johannine school respectively. In the case of the Johannine writings, numerous shared theological insights, their shared idiom, the confirming witness of the "we" in John 21, the ethical assertions in the Epistles and in the Gospel, the presentation of Jesus as teacher, and the community structure reflected in 2 and 3John all point to the existence of a Johannine school that was probably located in Ephesus.

5. Hermeneutische Dimensionen: Sinn und Deutung, Kontexte, Anschlussfähigkeit und Diskurs

Eine neue religiöse Bewegung beruft sich in der Regel auf den Himmel, sie fällt aber nicht vom Himmel. Sie ist eingebettet in hermeneutische, kulturtheoretische und religionsgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen. Welche Voraussetzungen müssen erfüllt sein, damit eine neue religiöse Bewegung Erfolg hat? Die menschliche Lebenswelt muss gedeutet, sinnhaft gedacht und erschlossen werden, denn nur so sind Leben und Handeln in ihr möglich. Jede Religion, jede Philosophie, aber auch jede naturwissenschaftliche Theorie und jede politische Idee ist als Sinnform ein solcher Erschließungsvorgang, der das Leben deutet und erklären soll.

The human environment has to be interpreted, has to be thought meaningful, and has to be made accessible, because only in this way can living and acting in it become possible. Every religion, every philosophy, yet also every scientific theory and every political idea, too, as forms of creating meaning, are acts of interpretation that construct and explain life.

Konkret vollziehen sich diese Erschließungsvorgänge als Sinnbildungen (*meaning-formations*), das heißt, es werden bestimmte Deutemuster herangezogen, um ein bestimmtes Handeln zu interpretieren und zu legitimieren.[42] Das Christentum, aber auch der Marxismus, der Islam oder der Materialismus der Gegenwart sind Lebensdeutungen, die von Menschen als sinnvoll erlebt wurden und werden. Der Erfolg derartiger Sinnbildungen in der Geschichte entscheidet darüber, ob sie als Sinn- und Orientierungsrahmen in das kollektive Bewusstsein übergehen oder aus der Geschichte verschwinden. Kulturtheoretischer Ausgangspunkt ist dabei das Modell sich überlagernder und ergänzender kultureller Kontexte, in denen Menschen damals wie heute ihre Identität ausbilden und ständig weiterformen. Kulturen sind nie statische Gebilde, sondern stetig im Fluss. Konstitutive Merkmale einer Kultur sind zuallererst die Sprache und die mit ihr transportierten Traditionen und Wertvorstellungen. Das johanneische Christentum ist vor allem durch die griechische Sprache in mehrere kulturelle Kontexte eingebettet: das hellenistische Judentum, das frühe Christentum (in besonderer Nähe zur paulinischen Tradition), die kulturelle Welt der Metropole Ephesus, die politische Welt der Provinz Asia und schließlich in das Römische Reich insgesamt.

Innerhalb dieser komplexen Zusammenhänge lassen sich die Erfolge der frühchristlichen Mission nur unter der Voraussetzung erklären, dass eine hohe Anschlussfähigkeit (*integrative capacity*) in Bezug auf die zahlreichen Kontexte bestand. Der Kontext bezieht sich nicht nur auf Texte, sondern auch auf geistige Räume, in denen Anschauungen entstehen und unter vielfältigen Modifikationen vertreten werden. Diese Räume sind durch Riten, Mentalitäten, Landschaften und Architektur, vor allem aber durch zahlreiche politische, religiöse, philosophische und ethische Diskurse geprägt, an denen das entstehende Christentum mit seiner Lehre, seinen Riten und seiner Ethik teilnimmt. Was Johannes über Leben und Tod, Glauben, Geist, Frieden und Liebe sagt, sind nicht nur binnengemeindliche Informationen, sondern auch Teil sich überlagernder und ergänzender Diskurse, die in Kulturräumen immer schon existieren und sich ständig verändern. Die johanneische Theologie und Ethik sind eingebettet in bestehende jüdische und griechisch-römische Konzepte und sind als ein maßgeblicher Beitrag innerhalb dieser Debatten zu verstehen. Ebenso wie antike Kulte, Religionen oder Philosophen vertritt Johannes einen umfassenden Anspruch auf Lebensdeutung und Lebensbewältigung, wobei die Ethik von herausragender Bedeutung ist.

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[42] Vgl. dazu U. Schnelle, *Paulus. Leben und Denken* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, [2]2014), 1–25.

Erfolg konnte das johanneische Christentum in diesem anspruchsvollen Umfeld nur haben, weil es in der Lage war, sich auch an zentralen antiken religiös-philosophischen Diskursen zu beteiligen.

The success of Johannine Christianity in such an intellectually and culturally demanding surrounding becomes comprehensible only because it was able to participate in the main discourses of ancient religion and philosophy.

III. Die Methodik einer philosophischen Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums

Eine nachvollziehbare und strenge Methodik ist die Voraussetzung für die Plausibilität einer möglichen philosophischen Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums. Wann kann man davon sprechen, dass Johannes bewusst an einem philosophischen Diskurs teilnimmt?

1) Wenn er einen Begriff einführt bzw. benutzt, der eindeutig philosophisch konnotiert ist.

2) Wenn er ein Thema aufgreift, das ebenfalls durch die Philosophiegeschichte bestimmt ist.

3) Wenn er sich in eine Debatte einbringt, die in der Philosophie seiner Zeit geführt wird.

4) Wenn es inhaltliche Parallelen zwischen johanneischen Texten und Texten von antiken Philosophen gibt (z. B. innerhalb der Ethik).

Weiter wäre zu klären, in welcher Form der Diskurs geführt wird: Als bloße Adaption eines Begriffes? Als Erweiterung bzw. Variation eines Begriffsfeldes? Als Präzisierung? Als Überbietung? Als Ablehnung?

A comprehensible and strict methodology is the precondition for the plausibility of any possible philosophical interpretation of the Gospel of John. On which condition can be stated, that John is consciously taking part in a philosophical discourse?

1) When he introduces or uses a notion, which is explicitly philosophically connoted.

2) When he approaches a subject that is determined by the history of philosophy.

3) When he contributes to a debate, which is of interest for the philosophy of his day.

4) When there are parallels with regards to content between Johannine texts and texts of ancient philosophers (e.g. within ethics).

Furthermore it has to be considered, in which way the discourse is conducted: Merely as an adaptation of a notion? As an extension or variation of a conceptual field? As a clarification? As an outdoing? As a rejection?

Zudem ist zu fragen: Wie verhalten sich die externe Stoßrichtung des Diskurses (als Teilnahme an Themen der Zeit) und die interne Stoßrichtung (als Diskurs mit anderen christlichen Gruppen) zueinander? Voraussetzung für all diese Schritte ist die Wahrnehmung der jeweiligen Zeitverhältnisse, in die hinein ein Diskurs spricht.

1. Beispiel 1: Kosmologie und Logos

Zu den zentralen Themen aller relevanten philosophischen und religiösen Systeme der Antike gehörte die Kosmologie.[43] Die Wirklichkeit als Ganze, das Werden und Vergehen der Welt(en), der Einfluss der Gestirne auf menschliches Leben, die in der Welt wirksamen überindividuellen Kräfte[44] und die Möglichkeiten postmortaler Existenzweisen wurden z. B. bei Platon, Epikur und in der Stoa vielfältig erörtert.

Among the central themes of all relevant philosophical and religious systems of antiquity cosmology is a prominent theme. The reality as a whole, the rise and fall of the world(s), the influence of the stars on human life, the work in the world of individual powers and possibilities of post-mortem ways of existence were such as Plato, Epicurus and the Stoics discussed variedly.

Den Anfang zu denken, gehört somit zu den Basisaufgaben aller antiken religiösen und philosophischen Systeme. Theologie ist ebenso wie die Philosophie ihrem Wesen nach Ursprungsdenken, für die es keinen herkunftslosen Anfang gibt. Es geht um den Ursprung und die Einheit des Seienden, um so das Wesen und das Ziel der Welt und des Lebens zu benennen. Im Johannesprolog verschränken sich dabei Theologie, Christologie, Kosmologie und Anthropologie, um gewissermaßen einen Kurzabriss der Heilsgeschichte zu geben und eine einzigartige Perspektive zu eröffnen. Zu diesem Anfang gehört der Logos, der als eine bestimmte, einzelne und der Gemeinde bekannte Größe auftritt: Jesus Christus als Gottes schöpferisches, wirkmächtiges und lebenschaffendes Wort – Wort, weil

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[43] Vgl. dazu K. Algra, „Die Anfänge der Kosmologie", in *Handbuch frühe griechische Philosophie* (Hg. A. A. Long; Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 42–60 (Hesiod, Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes).

[44] Ein klassisches Beispiel aus dem 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr. ist Pseudo-Aristoteles, *Mund.* 7:1–28, wo nacheinander das kosmologische und auf den Menschen bezogene Wirken Gottes/der Götter dargestellt wird: „Einer ist Gott, doch trägt er viele Namen (εἷς δὲ ὢν πολυώνυμός ἐστι), weil er nach all dem Geschehen genannt wird, das er selbst immerfort erneuert. Nennen wir ihn Zeus und den ‚Durchwaltenden', indem wir die Namen nebeneinander gebrauchen, als wollten wir sagen ‚der, durch den wir leben'. [15] ‚Sohn des Kronos und der Zeit' (*chronos*) heißt er, weil er aus einer grenzenlosen Ewigkeit in die andere schreitet. Der ‚Blitzende', der ‚Donnerer', der ‚Heitere',‚Äthergott', ‚Herr des Donnerkeils' heißt er und auch ‚Regengott' nach Regenfällen, Blitzschlägen und anderen Wettererscheinungen. ‚Fruchtbringer' heißt er von den Feldfrüchten, [20] ‚Städtebeschützer' von den Stadtgemeinden, auch ‚Schutzgott von Geschlecht, Haus und Stamm' und ‚Gott der Väter', weil er an diesen Gemeinschaften Anteil hat. Desgleichen ist er der ‚Schützer von Gemeinschaft und Freundschaft, Gastrecht, Heerzug und Sieg', ‚Reiniger', ‚Rächer', ‚Hort der Schutzflehenden' und ‚Herr der Sühneopfer', wie die Dichter sagen, ‚Retter' und wahrer ‚Befreier', [25] mit einem Wort: Der ‚Himmlische', ‚Irdische', nach jedem Wesen und jeder Lage benannt, weil er auch von allem selbst der Urheber ist (ἅτε πάντων αὐτὸς αἴτιος ὤν)."

λόγος und λέγειν zusammengehören und schon hier die Verkündigung Jesu Christi im Evangelium mitzudenken ist.

Der λόγος-*Begriff* ist eindeutig philosophisch vorkonnotiert.[45] Aus der Vielzahl möglicher Vergleichsautoren und Vergleichstexte seien nur einige genannt:

Von großer Bedeutung ist die Logosphilosophie des *Heraklit* von Ephesus (geb. 544 v. Chr.). Über ihn heißt es in Diogenes Laertius 9.5: „Sein berühmtes Buch trägt zwar von seinem Gesamtinhalt her den Titel *Über die Natur* (Περὶ φύσεως), ist aber in drei *Logoi* unterteilt, nämlich in den *Logos* über das All, in den politischen und in den theologischen *Logos*" (περὶ τοῦ παντὸς καὶ πολιτικὸν καὶ θεολογικόν).[46] Übereinstimmungen zwischen seinem Logosbegriff und dem Prolog bestehen in folgenden Punkten:[47] a) Der Logos ist ewig und präexistent (Frg. 1).[48] b) Der Logos ist Schöpfungsmittler (Frg. 1). c) Ablehnung und Aufnahme des Logos (Frg. 1; Frg. 50). d) Zwar wird bei Heraklit an keiner Stelle der Logos Gott oder göttlich genannt, aber dieses Attribut lässt sich besonders aus Frg. 67 und Frg. 30 erschließen.[49]

Der Rhetoriker *Isokrates* (436–338 v. Chr.) preist den Logos: „Es ist der Logos, der uns fast alles, was wir an Zivilisation hervorgebracht haben, zu vollbringen ermöglicht hat. Er ist es, der die Normen aufgestellt hat über

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[45] Zum Logosbegriff insgesamt vgl. B. Jendorff, *Der Logosbegriff. Seine philosophische Grundlegung bei Heraklit von Ephesos und seine theologische Indienstnahme durch Johannes den Evangelisten* (EHS.P 19; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976); W. Kelber, *Die Logoslehre. Von Heraklit bis Origenes* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), 22–25; L. Perilli (Hg.), *Logos. Theorie und Begriffsgeschichte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013). Klassisch Diogenes Laertius VI 3: „Als Erster definierte Antisthenes den Logos, indem er sagte: Ein Logos ist das, was klarmacht, was etwas war oder ist" (Λόγος ἐστὶν ὁ τὸ τί ἦν ἢ ἔστι δηλῶν). Fast zeitgleich mit dem Johannesevangelium formuliert z.B. Dio Chrysostomus, *Or. 36*, 31: „So zielt der Logos, um es kurz zu sagen, darauf ab, das Menschengeschlecht mit der Gottheit harmonisch in Verbindung zu bringen und in einem Begriff alles Vernunftbegabte zusammenzufassen; denn in der Vernunft sieht sie die einzige sichere und unauflösliche Grundlage von Gemeinschaft und Gerechtigkeit"; weitere Texte in *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 10–15 (Anm. 1).

[46] Zitiert nach L. M. Gemelli Marciano (Hg.), *Die Vorsokratiker: Griechisch-lateinisch-deutsch* (3 vols.; Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2007), 1:285–86 (= DK 22 A 1).

[47] Vgl. dazu Jendorff, *Der Logosbegriff*, 75–78 (Anm. 45); Kelber, *Die Logoslehre*, 22–25 (Anm. 45).

[48] Über das Werden und Vergehen der Welt sagt Heraklit: „Denn er will sagen, dass Feuer durch den das All regierenden Logos (ὅτι πῦρ ὑπὸ τοῦ διοικοῦντος λόγου) und Gott über Luft ins Feuchte, den Keim der Weltbildung, das er Meer nennt, verwandelt wird; daraus aber entstehen wiederum Erde und Himmel und das dazwischen Liegende. Wie es wieder zu Zurückwandlung und zum Weltbrand kommt, zeigt er deutlich im Folgenden …" (Zitiert nach Gemelli Marciano [Hg.], *Die Vorsokratiker*, 1:309 [Anm. 46] = DK 22 B 31).

[49] Vgl. Jendorff, *Der Logosbegriff*, 63–66, 82–84 (Anm. 45).

gerecht und ungerecht, schön und hässlich, ohne deren Ordnung wir nicht fähig wären, mit anderen zusammenzuleben. … Denn die Fähigkeit der Rede ist das wichtigste Zeichen vernünftiger Sinnesart. … Wenn wir zusammenfassend diese Macht bestimmen wollen, so werden wir finden, dass nichts in der Welt, was mit Vernunft (φρονίμως) geschieht, ohne Logos (ἀλόγως) geschieht, sondern der Logos ist der Führer (ἡγεμών) aller Tätigkeit und alles Denkens, und die ihn am meisten gebrauchen, sind diejenigen, die den meisten Geist (νοῦς) haben" (*Ad Nic.* 7–9).[50]

Im monistischen System der *Stoa* ist der Logos die alle Körper durchdringende Kraft. In der Vorstellung der λόγοι σπερματικοί entfaltet die Stoa den Grundgedanken der ubiquitären Anwesenheit des Göttlichen in der Welt. Von Zenon (Frg. 155) wird die Anschauung überliefert, Gott sei durch die Materie „hindurchgegangen wie der Honig durch die Waben" (*SVP* 1:42,1–3). Nach stoischer Vorstellung war, ist und wird in der Welt nichts sein ohne den Logos.

Bei Chrysipp heißt es nach Diogenes Laertius 7.87–88: „Deshalb wird das Leben gemäß der Natur zum Ziel, was besagt, gemäß der eigenen Natur und der des Ganzen leben, und nichts tun, was das gemeinsame Gesetz (ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός) gewöhnlich verbietet, das Gesetz, das die rechte Vernunft ist (ὀρθὸς λόγος), die alles durchdringt, das identisch mit Zeus ist, dem Leiter der Verwaltung des Alls"; vgl. ferner Seneca, *Ep.* 124:14. Der Logos ist das Prinzip, das die Welt bis in die letzten Einzelzusammenhänge durchwaltet. Trotz gewichtiger Übereinstimmungen[51] bleibt in der Stoa der Gedanke unvorstellbar, daß der göttliche Logos ausschließlich in einer geschichtlichen Person Gestalt annimmt. Auch eine wirkliche Erlösungsvorstellung entwickelte die Stoa nicht, denn der dafür konstitutive Dualismus war ihr fremd.

Ein weiterer möglicher Anknüpfungspunkt sind die *alttestamentlichen Aussagen* über das Wirken des Wortes Gottes bei der Schöpfung und in der Geschichte (vgl. Jes 11:4 LXX; 55:11; Hab 3:5–6 LXX; Gen 1:3; Dtn 8:3; Ps 33:6; 46:6; Ex 20:1; ferner 4Esra 6:38–40).[52] Wie das Wort Gottes, so ist auch die Weisheit an den Taten Gottes (Ps 104:24) und der Schöpfung beteiligt (Jer 10:12; Sir 1:4; 24:3–6; Weish 7:22, 25, 27; Jes 10:13; Prov 3:19).

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[50] Übersetzung: W. Jaeger, *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen*, Bd. III (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1947), 151.

[51] Der Logos ist als πῦρ τεχνικόν auch Schöpfer, er wird mit der höchsten Gottheit identifiziert (Zeus) und er ist Offenbarer (vgl. Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 16).

[52] Vgl. E. D. Freed, „Theological Prelude to the Prologue of John's Gospel", *SJT* 32 (1979): 258–59. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 272, sieht das Alte Testament als Hintergrund des johanneischen λόγος-Gedankens.

Konstitutiv für den johanneichen Logos-Begriff ist die Gleichsetzung von λόγος und σοφία im *hellenistischen Judentum*. In Weish 9:1, 2 heißt es über Gott: ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον …[53] In der Weisheit Salomos erscheint ab Kapitel 18 nicht mehr die Sophia, sondern der Logos als die zentrale Gestalt.[54] Gott besiegt seine Feinde durch sein Wort, das um Mitternacht vom Himmel springt und wie ein Schwert umhergeht (Weish 18:15).

Bei *Philo* tritt der Logos vielfach für die Weisheit ein.[55] Wie die Weisheit ‚Erstling' (πρωτίστη, *Ebr*. 31) und ἀρχή (*Opif*. 54) ist, so kann auch der Logos der ‚Erstgeborene Gottes' (πρωτόγονος, *Conf*. 146) und ἀρχή (*Conf*. 146) heißen. Der Logos ist älter als alles Geschaffene (*Migr*. 6), er erscheint als Licht (*Somn*. 1.75), er ist Sohn und Eikon Gottes (Conf. 146–147; *Fug*. 109), er ist göttlich (θεός), nicht aber ὁ θεός (*Somn*. 1.229–230). Der Logos steigt herab unter die Menschen (*Somn*. 1.75, 85–86) und wird ihr Sachverwalter. Er wohnt unter den Menschen (*Post*. 122) und rettet jene, die mit der Tugend verwandt sind, während er ihre Feinde vernichtet (*Somn*. 1.85). Er ist Freund, Ratgeber (*Fug*. 6) und Lehrer (διδάσκαλος, *Ebr*. 157; *Somn*. 1.129, 191).

Nach *Epiktet* (ca. 55–120 n. Chr.) gibt Gott selbst Anteil an seiner Wirklichkeit durch das Pneuma bzw. den Logos: „Wer also die Regierung der Welt begriffen hat und einsieht, dass das größte, höchste und umfassendste Gemeinwesen das ist, welches aus den Menschen und Gott besteht, denn von Gott ist der Same nicht nur auf meinen Vater und Großvater, sondern auf alles, was auf Erden geboren wird oder ins Leben tritt, vorzüglicherweise aber auf die vernünftigen Geschöpfe, herabgekommen, und dass nur diese einer Gemeinschaft mit Gott fähig sind, weil sie durch die Vernunft (κατὰ τὸν λόγον) innig mit ihm verbunden sind, warum sollte, wer dies einsieht, sich nicht einen Weltbürger, warum nicht einen Sohn Gottes nennen? Warum sollte er sich vor irgendetwas in der Welt fürchten? … Und uns sollte der Gedanke nicht von allem Kummer und aller Furcht freimachen, dass wir Gott zum Schöpfer, Vater und Erhalter haben?" (*Diss*. 1.9.3–7).[56]

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[53] Vgl. auch Prov 4:5, wo ‚Wort meines Mundes' und ‚Weisheit' parallel stehen.

[54] Vgl. B. L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie im hellenistischen Judentum* (SUNT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 96.

[55] Vgl. dazu umfassend Mack, *Logos und Sophia*, 133–35 (Anm. 54). Mack vermutet, die Gleichsetzung von Logos und Sophia bei Philo sei durch ägyptische Motive ermöglicht worden. Zu den Übereinstimmungen zwischen Philo und den Prologaussagen vgl. auch Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 276 (Anm. 52).

[56] Vgl. auch Epiktet, *Diss*. 3.13.10–12: „Hingegen verspricht uns die Philosophie, uns auch vor diesen Feinden Frieden schaffen zu wollen. Und was sagt sie? ‚Wenn ihr mir eure Aufmerksamkeit gönnen wollt, ihr Menschen, so sollt ihr, wo ihr auch immer sein, was ihr auch immer tun mögt, in keine Betrübnis, in keinen Zorn gebracht, nie gezwun-

Über Hermes wird beim Stoiker *Cornutus* (um 60 n. Chr.) berichtet: „Hermes ist die Vernunft (ὁ Ἑρμῆς ὁ λόγος ὤν), welche die Götter aus dem Himmel zu uns [Menschen] sandten (ὃν ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξ οὐρανοὶ οἱ θεοί), wobei sie von den Lebewesen der Erde allein den Menschen zur Vernunft begabt (λογικόν) machten, etwas, was sie selbst für das Herausragendste über alles andere hinaus hielten“ (Cornutus, *Nat. d.* 365–368).

Im griechischen Denken ist der Logos eine göttliche Größe/Gabe/Kraft, die Leben als Kultur und Ordnung ermöglicht und mit der Vernunft (νοῦς) und dem Gesetz (νόμος) als Lebensprinzip sehr eng verwandt ist.

Kaum zufällig findet sich das absolute ὁ λόγος („Wort/Rede/Denken/Vernunft“) als christologischer Titel nur im johanneischen Traditionsbereich (Joh 1:1, 14; Apk 19:13; vgl. 1 Joh 1:1). Logos ist bei Johannes wie in der griechischen Tradition göttliches Wirk- und Lebensprinzip, es benennt die Zuwendung Gottes zum Menschen und die ursprüngliche Einheit menschlichen Denkens mit Gott. Der λόγος-Begriff eröffnet bewusst einen weiten Kulturraum: die Welt der griechisch-römischen Philosophie/Bildung und des hellenistischen Judentums alexandrinischer Prägung. Als Schlüsselwort der griechischen Bildungsgeschichte aktiviert λόγος ein umfangreiches Anspielungspotenzial, das bei der produktiven Mitarbeit der Hörenden/Lesenden in den Verstehensprozess mit einfließt. Das jeweilige kulturelle Wissen ist mit der Enzyklopädie einer Sprache verbunden, die von einem Autor aktiviert werden kann. Begriffe und die mit ihnen verbundene Normativität entfalten ihre Kraft nur innerhalb einer bereits existierenden Sprachgemeinschaft, die Regeln für das Verstehen, Handeln und Urteilen vorgibt und ständig neu prägt.[57] Indem Johannes den Schlüsselbegriff der griechisch-römischen Kulturgeschichte zum christologischen Leitbegriff erhebt, drückt er einen universalen Anspruch aus: Der Logos Jesus Christus ist aus der ursprünglichen Einheit mit Gott hervorgegangen, er ist Gottes schöpferische Kraft, er ist der Ursprung und das Ziel allen Seins, und im Logos Jesus Christus findet die antike Religions- und Geistesgeschichte ihr Ziel. Damit nimmt Johannes auch eine umfassende Neukodierung des Logos-Begriffes vor!

It is hardly a coincidence that the absolute ὁ λόγος (“Word/speech/thought/reason”) is found as a Christological title only in the realm of Johannine tradition (John 1:1, 14; Rev 19:13; cf. 1 John 1:1). In John, as in Greek tradition generally, Logos is the divine

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gen, nie verhindert werden, ihr sollt ohne Leidenschaften und in vollkommener Freiheit euer Leben zubringen.‘ Wenn einer diesen Frieden hat, einen andern, als der Kaiser hat ausrufen lassen (denn woher sollte er die Macht haben, einen solchen ausrufen zu lassen?), einen Frieden, den Gott durch die Vernunft (διὰ τοῦ λόγου) hat verkündigen lassen, warum sollte der, wenn er allein ist, sich nicht damit zufriedengeben können?“

[57] Deshalb ist es nicht möglich, den Logosbegriff auf einen jüdisch-hellenistischen Hintergrund zu beschränken, wie es z. B. F. Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Bd. I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 616–17, tut.

principle of life and work; it designates the turning of God to humanity and the original unity of human thinking with God. The λόγος-concept intentionally opens up a broad cultural vista: the worlds of Greco-Roman philosophy/education and of Hellenistic Judaism of the Alexandrian type. As a key term of Greek educational history, the word λόγος triggers a comprehensive potential of allusions that contributes to the generative collaboration of the hearer/reader in the process of understanding. The act of knowledge as it occurs in each particular cultural context is linked to the total available linguistic range that can be activated by an author. Concepts, terminology, and the normative aspects with which they are linked develop their force only within a linguistic community that already exists, a community that provides in advance the rules for understanding, acting, and making coherent judgments, a community that is constantly reformulating such rules. By taking the key concept of Greco-Roman cultural history and making it into the leitmotif of his Gospel, John is expressing a universal claim: the Logos Jesus Christ has come forth from his original unity with God, he is God's own creative power, he is the origin and goal of all being, and in the Logos Jesus Christ the religious and intellectual history of antiquity reaches its goal. Therefore John attempts an extensive recoding of the Logos-concept!

2. Beispiel 2: Wahrheit

Neben dem Logos greift Johannes bereits im Prolog mit dem *Wahrheitsbegriff*[58] einen weiteren zentralen Terminus antiker Philosophie auf.[59] In Joh 1:14, 17 erscheint Jesus Christus als Ort der Gnade und Wahrheit Gottes, das heißt, Wahrheit hat Widerfahrnischarakter und wird von Johannes personal gedacht. Wahrheit ist damit weitaus mehr und etwas völlig anderes als der Konsens subjektiver Vermutung. Als Wahrheit erschließt Jesus den Glaubenden den Sinn seiner Sendung, offenbart ihnen den Vater und befreit sie dadurch von den Mächten des Todes, der Sünde und der Finsternis. Jesus Christus ist nicht nur Zeuge der Wahrheit,[60] sondern die Wahrheit selbst. Freiheit ist somit die unmittelbare Wirkung der Wahrheitserfahrung der Glaubenden: „Und ihr werdet die Wahrheit erkennen, und die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen" (Joh 8:32). Die personale Dimension des johanneischen Wahrheitsbegriffs zeigt deutlich Joh 14:6: „Ich

[58] Vgl. hier Y. Ibuki, *Die Wahrheit im Johannesevangelium* (BBB 39; Bonn: Hanstein, 1972); P. G. Kirchschläger, *Nur ich bin die Wahrheit. Der Wahrheitsanspruch des johanneischen Christus und das Gespräch zwischen den Religionen* (HBS 63; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2010); F. Richert, *Platon und Christus. Antike Wurzeln des Neuen Testaments* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 9–53.

[59] Vgl. dazu Texte in *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 794–95 (Anm. 1). Ein Beispiel: Plato, *Leg.* 2.663e: „Etwas Schönes ist die Wahrheit, Fremder, und etwas Dauerhaftes; es scheint allerdings nicht leicht, ihr Glauben zu verschaffen."

[60] Zur hellenistischen Vorstellung, dass Wahrheit immer eine Gabe Gottes/der Götter ist, die sich im rechten Gebrauch der Vernunft vollzieht, vgl. Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 1 (*Mor.* 351C–D): „Kein Ziel ist für Menschen bedeutsamer, und keine Gnadengabe Gottes entspricht seiner Würde mehr als die Wahrheit. Alles andere, dessen Menschen bedürfen, ‚schenkt' Gott ihnen, aber an Vernunft und Denken ‚gibt er ihnen Anteil'; denn diese sind sein ureigenster Besitz, von diesen macht er selber Gebrauch."

bin der Weg und die Wahrheit und das Leben; niemand kommt zum Vater außer durch mich.“ Jesus ist der Weg, weil er selbst die Wahrheit ist und das Leben spendet. Der Evangelist bindet das Verständnis Gottes exklusiv an die Person Jesu; wer Gott ist, kann nur an Jesus abgelesen werden. Damit formuliert Johannes einen nicht mehr zu überbietenden Exklusivitätsanspruch[61] und erhebt einen *inneren Absolutheitsanspruch*: Die Möglichkeit, Gott zu erkennen und zu Gott zu gelangen als Ziel jeden religiösen Lebens und Strebens, eröffnet sich nur in Jesus Christus. Jede Religion/ Bewegung lebt von ihrer inneren Überzeugungskraft – wird sie infrage gestellt, ist eine Existenz auf Dauer nicht möglich. Innerer Absolutheitsanspruch heißt, Jesus als den einen und einzigen Weg zu Gott zu glauben und zu bekennen. Es bedeutet, die Zusage Jesu, dass er den einen wahren Weg zu Gott eröffnet, wirklich ernst zu nehmen und nicht von vornherein zu relativieren. Ein äußerer Absolutheitsanspruch wäre, diesen Wahrheitsanspruch unter allen Umständen durchzusetzen, möglicherweise sogar mit Gewalt. Davon ist das johanneische Christentum weit entfernt, denn es ist eine Religion der Liebe; nicht Wahrheit und Gewalt, sondern allein Wahrheit und Liebe gehören für Johannes zusammen.

Along with the imagery of the Logos, in the Prologue John takes up another central term of ancient philosophy, the concept of truth. In John 1:14, 17, Jesus Christ appears as the locus of God's grace and truth, which means that truth has the character of event, a reality that can be experienced, and is thought of by John in personal terms. Truth is thus much more than, and completely different from, a consensus of subjective assumptions. As himself the truth, Jesus discloses to believers the meaning of his sending, reveals the Father to them, and thereby frees them from the powers of death, sin, and darkness. Jesus Christ is not only a witness to the truth, but is himself the truth. Freedom is thus the direct effect of the believers' experience of truth: “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). The personal dimension of the Johannine concept of truth is clear in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” Jesus is the way, because he himself is the truth, and the one who grants life. The evangelist links authentic understanding of God exclusively to the person of Jesus; who God is can only be seen by looking at Jesus. John thus formulates an unsurpassable claim to exclusivity that represents an intrinsic claim to absoluteness: The possibility of coming to know God and coming to God, the goal of every religious life and striving, is found only in Jesus Christ. Every religion, every movement, lives from its inherent capacity to persuade – if this begins to be doubted, its existence is not possible in the long run. The intrinsic claim to absoluteness means one must believe and confess that Jesus is the one and only way to God. It means taking seriously Jesus' claim that he has opened up the one true way to God, and not to relativize it a priori. An extrinsic claim to absoluteness would be a claim that could and should be enforced under all circumstances, possibly including even violence. Johannine Christianity is far removed from this idea, for it is a religion of love; for John, truth and violence cannot belong together, but only truth and love.

[61] Dieser Anspruch ist im alttestamentlichen Gottesbegriff angelegt; vgl. nur Ex 20:2–3; Jes 44:6; Dtn 6:4–5.

Im *Prozess* gegen Jesus geht es nicht um machtpolitische Fragen, es wird über die Wahrheit gerichtet (vgl. Joh 18:28–38a), die Welt streitet gegen die Offenbarung Gottes. Wahrheit ist für Johannes auch hier kein noetischer oder kommunikativer, sondern allein ein theologischer, das heißt christologischer und soteriologischer Begriff. Der sich in Jesus Christus offenbarende und rettende Gott ist die Wahrheit. Die Wahrheit ist Gottes Identität, und dadurch unterscheidet sich Gott grundlegend von der Welt. Als Sohn Gottes ist Jesus Christus die Wahrheit, er offenbarte sie in seinem Wirken, und er bezeugt gerade in seinem Leiden die Wahrheit. Das Selbst-Zeugnis Jesu für die Wahrheit kulminiert im ersten Verhör durch Pilatus, denn hier zeigt sich endgültig, dass Jesus die Konsequenz seiner Sendung nicht verleugnet und sein Tod Zeugnis für die Wahrheit ist: Kreuz und Erhöhung sind der nicht zu überbietende Ausdruck der Einheit von Vater und Sohn, die als Einheit der Wahrheit und der Liebe auch für die Welt zum rettenden Geschehen wird. Das Erscheinen der Wahrheit in Jesus Christus stellt Pilatus vor eine Entscheidung. Mit seiner berühmten Frage: „Was ist Wahrheit?“ (Joh 18:38a) nimmt Pilatus den Standpunkt der Skepsis ein.[62] Pilatus flüchtet nicht in Entscheidungslosigkeit,[63] sondern vertritt bewusst eine philosophische Gegenposition zum Wahrheitsanspruch Jesu.[64] Die Begegnung mit der Wahrheit nötigt den Menschen zu einer Entscheidung, eine Ablehnung führt ebenso wie das Ausweichen in das Gericht (vgl. Joh 3:18–21). Wie zuvor die Juden (vgl. Joh 8) kann auch Pilatus die menschgewordene Wahrheit Jesus Christus nicht verstehen, denn er ist nicht ‚aus der Wahrheit‘. Damit ist das Schicksal Jesu besiegelt!

3. Beispiel 3: Gottesdefinitionen

Nicht zufällig finden sich die drei einzigen Definitionen Gottes in der joh. Literatur: Gott ist Licht (1 Joh 1:5: ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν), Gott ist Liebe (1 Joh 4:8b, 16b: ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστιν) und Gott ist Geist (Joh 4:24: ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα ἐστιν). Dies entspricht der johanneischen Tendenz, sowohl begrifflich zu fixieren und zu präzisieren als auch geläufige religiöse Symbole aufzunehmen, um so Verstehen zu ermöglichen. Subjekt und Prädikat sind in der

[62] Nach Diogenes Laertius 9.74 zeichnet sich der Standpunkt der Skeptiker dadurch aus, dass sie „den Lehrsätzen der Sekten sämtlich den Garaus machen, ohne selbst etwas lehrsatzmäßig festzustellen“.

[63] So zumeist die Ausleger, die meinen, Pilatus vertrete keine philosophisch-skeptische Position; vgl. z. B. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HTKNT IV/3; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1982), 287.

[64] Vgl. Cicero, *Nat. Deor.* 1.67 („Aber wo ist die Wahrheit?“); Diogenes Laertius 9.61 (Pyrrhon wird die Aussage zugeschrieben, „dass nichts in Wahrheit sei, vielmehr geschehe alles, was die Menschen tun, auf Grund bloßer gesetzmäßiger Übereinkunft und nach Maßgabe der Gewohnheit“); 9.83–84 (Pyrrhon konstatiert: „Unsere Parole also sei: Zurückhaltung des Urteils über die Wahrheit“). Vgl. ferner Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 1.8–12.

johanneischen Symbolsprache unumkehrbar; Symbole menschlicher Religiosität werden mit Gott verbunden, dürfen aber nicht mit ihm verwechselt werden.[65]

It is no accident that the three definitions of God in the New Testament are all found in the Johannine literature: God is light (1 John 1:5: ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν), God is love (1 John 4:8b, 16b: ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστιν) and God is Spirit (John 4:24: ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα ἐστιν). This corresponds to twin Johannine tendencies, to fix ideas precisely and to adopt the religious symbolism of his milieu in order to facilitate understanding. In such symbolic Johannine statements, the subject and predicate nominative are not interchangeable; symbols from the world of human religion are linked to God, but may not be confused with God.

Licht als Symbol für Gott findet sich bereits vielfach im Alten Testament (vgl. Jes 2:3, 5; 10:17; 45:7; Ps 27:1; 104:2) und ist in der gesamten Antike verbreitet.[66] Licht kommt von ‚oben', ist hell und rein und weist somit Eigenschaften des Göttlichen auf, ebenso ist die Finsternis fest in der menschlichen Erfahrung als Ort der Gefährdung verankert. In der johanneischen Konzeption werden diese Elemente aufgenommen und spezifisch bearbeitet: ‚Licht' und ‚Finsternis' konstituieren sich angesichts der Offenbarung in Jesus Christus (Joh 8:12: „Ich bin das Licht der Welt"; vgl. 1:9; 9:5; 12:36, 46), die Menschen sind nicht selbst das Licht, vielmehr werden sie vom Licht betroffen und finden sich im Schein des Lichtes vor (vgl. Ps 36:10). So wie das Licht ein Kennzeichen der Offenbarung ist, zeugt die Finsternis von ihrer Abwesenheit. Innerhalb der johanneischen Symbolsprache bezeichnet Licht als Inbegriff der Offenbarung den Bereich der Gottzugehörigkeit und damit des wahren Lebens, während Finsternis für Gottesferne, Gericht und Tod steht.

Ausgehend von den starken Impulsen Jesu (vgl. Mk 12:28–34; Mt 5:43–45) spielt die *Liebesvorstellung in der frühchristlichen Symbolsprache* von

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[65] Vgl. dazu C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 4: „A symbol is an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance. In Johannine terms, symbols span the chasm between what is ‚from above' and what is ‚from below' without collapsing the distinction"; R. Zimmermann, *Christologie der Bilder im Johannesevangelium* (WUNT 171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[66] Vgl. dazu umfassend O. Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis. Ein metaphorisches Paradigma in den johanneischen Schriften* (HBS 5; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1995); Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 123–54 (Anm. 65); E. E. Popkes, *Die Theologie der Liebe Gottes in den johanneischen Schriften* (WUNT 2/197; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 229–39. van Kooten, „The ‚True Light Which Enlightens Everyone' (John 1:9)", 151 ff. (Anm. 3), sieht bei Joh 1:9 einen unmittelbaren platonischen Einfluss. In *Phaidon* 109e wird vom ‚wahren Himmel, wahren Licht (τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς) und der wahren Erde' gesprochen, die sich im göttlichen Bereich jenseits der erkennbaren Welt befinden. „What I suggest is that the author of John's gospel might well have become acquainted with Plato within the context of Greek *paideia* somewhere in Palestine, just as happened in the case of Justus of Tiberias" (a.a.O., 174).

Anfang an eine zentrale Rolle. Im Johannesevangelium und im 1. Johannesbrief wird sie auf den Begriff gebracht:[67] Weil die Selbstmitteilung Gottes als umfassende Liebesbewegung verstanden wird, ist die Selbstdefinition Gottes als Liebe folgerichtig. Die Liebe, die sich auf die Welt richtet, lässt Gott in die Welt kommen. In seinem Sohn erweist sich Gott als Liebe und als Liebender, indem er seine Liebe schenkt und in der Geschwisterliebe zur Erfüllung und zur Vollendung kommen lässt. Dieses Konzept weist auch eine religionsphilosophische Potenz auf: Gott kann nur als Liebe gedacht werden; jede andere Definition verfehlt sein Wesen, das heißt, Gewalt und Gott schließen sich aus. Diese Anschauung besticht nicht nur durch ihre prägnante Einfachheit, große Tiefe und schlichte Wahrheit, sondern ist meines Wissens ohne eine explizite religionsgeschichtliche Parallele,[68] das heißt, hier wird nicht weniger als ein neues Gottesmodell in die Geistesgeschichte eingeführt!

Die Wendung ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα ἐστιν (Joh 4:24: „Gott ist Geist“) ist ein Spitzensatz hellenistischer Religionsgeschichte und johanneischer Theologie.[69] Weil Gott Geist ist und nur im und aus dem Geist richtig angebetet werden kann, ist das johanneische Gottesdienstverständnis universal und

[67] Zur ethischen Dimension des johanneischen Liebesbegriffs vgl. J. G. van der Watt and R. Zimmermann (Hg.), *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (WUNT 291; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

[68] Nahe kommt der johanneischen Aussage Plato, *Leg*. 10.900d: Die Götter „sind in jeder Tugend vollkommen gut und haben daher die Fürsorge für das gesamte All als ihr ureigenstes Amt inne“; sie sind „gut und vollkommen“ (901e).

[69] Texte in: *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 226–34 (Anm. 1); vgl. z. B. Zenon, Frg. 160 (*SVP* 1:42,23–30); Kleanthes, Frg. 533 (*SVP* 1:121,6f.); Frg. 1009 (*SVP* 2:299,11–13); Chrysipp, Frg. 310 (*SVP* 2:112,31f.); *Disticha Catonis* 1.1: „Wenn Gott Geist ist, wie uns die Schriften lehren, so sollst du ihn vor allem mit reinem Herzen verehren“; Seneca, *Helv*. 8:3; Cicero, *Acad. post*. 1.29, spricht über die Kraft, die den Kosmos zusammenhält: „Diese zusammenhaltende Kraft sei, wie sie sagen, die Seele der Welt und zugleich vollkommener Geist und vollkommene Weisheit, die sie Gott nennen; er sei eine Art von vorausschauender Klugheit, die für alle Dinge, die ihr anvertraut sind, sorgt, und zwar zuerst für die Himmelskörper, dann für die Dinge auf der Erde, die den Menschen angehen.“ Seneca, *Ep*. 31:11: „Suchen muss man, was nicht von Tag zu Tag schlechter wird, wogegen man nicht Widerstand leisten kann. Was ist das? Der Geist, doch dieser aufrecht, gut und groß: Was anders kannst du ihn nennen als Gott, im Menschenkörper zu Gast weilend? Dieser Geist kann in einen römischen Ritter wie in einen Freigelassenen wie in einen Sklaven fallen“ (= *Neuer Wettstein* II/2, 1069 [Anm. 1]); Epiktet, Diss. II 8:1–2, 9–11: „Gott ist nützlich. Aber auch das Gute ist nützlich. Wahrscheinlich liegt das Wesen des Guten dort, wo das Wesen Gottes ist. Was ist nun das Wesen Gottes? Fleisch? Keinesfalls. Landbesitz? Keinesfalls. Ruhm? Keinesfalls. Geist, Erkenntnis, wahre Vernunft. … Willst du also nicht das wahre Wesen des Guten dort suchen, wo es sich einzig und allein befindet, und an keiner anderen Stelle sonst? Wie? Sind denn nicht auch jene Wesen [Pflanzen und Tiere] Geschöpfe Gottes? Ja, aber sie sind nicht um ihrer selbst willen da und haben nicht teil am Göttlichen. Du aber bist um deiner selbst willen da, du bist ein Stück von Gott. Du hast in dir einen Teil von ihm.“ Vgl. ferner Philo, *Det*. 21; Seneca, *Ep*. 42:1–2.

lässt weder religiös-nationale noch soziale oder geschlechtliche Differenzierungen und Diskriminierungen zu. Samaritaner, Griechen und Juden können an diesen Gottesdiensten ebenso teilnehmen wie Frauen. Mit dem Auftreten Jesu vollzieht sich die wahre Anbetung Gottes ‚im Geist und in der Wahrheit', ohne blutige Opfer und darin dem Wesen Gottes als Liebe zu entsprechen. Die Frage nach dem ‚Wo' der Gottesverehrung stellt sich nicht mehr, denn Jesus Christus ist der neue Ort des Heils (vgl. Joh 2:14–22).

The expression ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα ἐστιν (John 4:24, "God is Spirit") is a climactic statement of Hellenistic religious history and of Johannine theology. Because God is Spirit and thus can only be approached in prayer that is inspired by the Spirit, the Johannine understanding of worship is universal, allowing no discrimination based on religious or national status, social class, or gender. Samaritans, Greeks, and Jews can all participate in this worship, just as can both men and women. With the appearance of Jesus in this world, the true worship of God "in Spirit and truth" arrives, without bloody sacrifices, and corresponding to the nature of God who is love. The question of "where" God can be truly worshipped is no longer valid, for Jesus Christ is himself the new locus of salvation (cf. John 2:14–22).

IV. Perspektiven

Die Beispiele ließen sich vermehren: Mit seiner Absage an einen geographisch fixierten Kultort, Tempel und Tempelbetrieb in Joh 4:20–23 befindet sich Johannes in einer großen Nähe zu starken Strömungen der Religionsphilosophie seiner Zeit: Die wahre Anbetung Gottes vollzieht sich nicht mit Opfern, sondern in einer ethischen/tugendhaften Ausrichtung der gesamten Existenz.[70] Auch das johanneische παρρησία-Konzept nimmt

[70] Philo, *Det.* 21, sagt über das wirkliche Opfer: „… – echt aber sind die der Seele, die als bloßes und einziges Opfer Wahrheit darbringt –, die unechten aber ablehnt; unecht aber sind alle Prunkstücke äußeren Überflusses." Für die wahre Verehrung Gottes gilt nach Seneca: „Nicht brauchen wir die Hände zum Himmel zu erheben noch den Tempelhüter anzuflehen, dass er uns zum Ohr des Götterbildes Zutritt gewähre, als ob wir so eher erhört werden könnten: Nahe ist dir Gott, mit dir ist er. Das behaupte ich, Lucilius, ein heiliger Geist wohnt in uns, als Beobachter und Überwacher unserer bösen und guten Taten; wie dieser von uns behandelt wurde, so behandelt er uns. Ein guter Mensch aber ist niemand ohne Gott" (*Ep.* 41:1–2). Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 11 (*Mor.* 355D), betont den symbolischen Charakter zahlreicher drastischer Aussagen in der ägyptischen Mythologie und fordert seine Leser auf, sich zu überzeugen, „dass du mit allen Opfern und Handlungen nichts Gottgefälligeres tun kannst als damit, dass du eine wahrheitsgemäße Auffassung von ihnen hegst, dann wirst du dem Übel entgehen, das nicht geringer ist als Gottlosigkeit: der abergläubischen Götterfurcht." In den pseudepigraphischen *Heraklitbriefen* heißt es: „Ihr Menschen wisst ja nichts. Sagt uns doch erstens, was Gott ist, damit man euch glauben kann, wenn ihr behauptet, jemand sei ungläubig. Wo ist Gott? In den Tempeln eingeschlossen? Ja, das ist eure Art von Frömmigkeit, Gott im Finstern aufzubewahren!

teil an einem zeitgenössischen politisch-philosophischen Diskurs.[71] Während die ἰσηγορία das formale Rederecht des Bürgers bezeichnet, meint παρρησία als politischer Begriff die freimütige Rede, die ohne Rücksicht auf Interessen oder Gefahren in eine konkrete Situation hinein die Wahrheit sagt und den wahren Philosophen auszeichnet. Der von den Brüdern Jesu geforderte (Joh 7:4) und von Teilen des Volkes noch nicht praktizierte Freimut (Joh 7:13) wird von Jesus eingelöst: Er redet frei und wahrhaftig, so dass man später nicht den Vorwurf machen kann, er habe seine Sendung vom Vater verschwiegen (vgl. Joh 18:20). Die wahrhaftige und freimütige Existenz zeichnet sich durch eine Übereinstimmung von Person, Handeln und Reden aus. Jesus lebt in der Übereinstimmung mit Gott, der Wahrheit und sich selbst, wie kein anderer kann er also das Prädikat der παρρησία für sich in Anspruch nehmen. Schließlich sind auch die Hirtenrede Joh 10[72] und das Symposion Joh 13:1–20[73] in zeitgenössische philosophische Diskurse eingebettet.

Es ist deutlich geworden: Die frühen christlichen Gemeinden mit ihren Mitgliedern aus verschiedenen kulturellen Kontexten (palästinisches/hellenistisches Judentum/griechisch-römische Religiosität/lokale Kulte und Vereine) waren von Anfang an sowohl durch ihre Mitglieder als auch durch die konkrete Umwelt in die philosophisch-religiösen Debatten der Zeit verwickelt. Um etablierte Deutesysteme wie das Judentum und den Helle-

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Ein Mensch wäre beleidigt, wenn man ihn ‚steinern' nennen würde, und für einen Gott soll die Bezeichnung ‚vom Felsen stammt er her' zutreffen? Ignoranten seid ihr! Wisst ihr nicht, dass Gott kein handwerkliches Produkt ist, dass kein Sockel für ihn ausreicht, dass er nicht nur einen heiligen Bezirk hat, sondern dass der ganze Kosmos mit der Vielfalt seiner Lebewesen, Pflanzen und Gestirne sein Tempel ist" (Übersetzung: Luck, *Die Weisheit der Hunde*, 291–92 [Anm. 12]). Dio von Prusa prophezeit den Athenern: „Je frommer und gottesfürchtiger ihr werdet, desto weniger Weihrauch, Räucherwerk und Kränze wird es bei euch geben, und ihr werdet weniger und nicht so kostspielige Opfer darbringen" (*Or. 13*, 35; vgl. ferner *Or. 33*, 28, wo betont wird, dass der Gottheit nichts an Häusern oder Tempelschätzen liegt: „Maß und Vernunft allein bringen Rettung. Sie machen jeden, der sich an sie hält, glücklich und Gott wohlgefällig, nicht Weihrauch und Myrrhe").

[71] Vgl. dazu M. Labahn, „Die παρρησία des Gottessohnes", in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums* (Hg. J. Frey und U. Schnelle; WUNT 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 321–63. Für den Philosophen gilt, dass er sich durch eine mutige Übereinstimmung von Existenz, Lehre und freimütigem Reden auszeichnet; vgl. nur Diogenes Laertius 5.5; Dio Chrysostomus, *Or. 4*, 58–59; Lucian, *Demon.* 3.

[72] Vgl. die Reden über den wahren Herrscher bei Dio von Prusa, der sich um sein Volk in Gerechtigkeit und nach den Gesetzen kümmert so wie ein wahrer Hirte um seine Herde (*Or. 1*, 13; *Or. 2*, 70–73; *Or. 3*, 40; *Or. 4*, 43–45).

[73] Plato spricht von einem ‚Bankett der Worte' (*Tim.* 27b), und insbesondere Plutarch weist auf den engen Zusammenhang zwischen Festbankett und philosophischen Erörterungen hin, von denen auch die profitieren, die nicht direkt daran teilnahmen; vgl. dazu dazu G. L. Parsenios, *Departure and Consolation. The Johannine Farewell Discourses in Light of Greco-Roman Literature* (NovTSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

nismus in all ihren Spielarten aufzunehmen, zu verändern und teilweise abzulösen, musste die johanneische Theologie über Anschlussfähigkeit, Plausibilität und überraschende Momente verfügen. Sie musste sich im Kontext konkurrierender Systeme und der maßgeblichen kulturell-religiösen Diskurse der Zeit behaupten und bewähren. Dazu gehörte die Teilhabe an religiös-philosophischen Diskursen, um den neuen Glauben denkerisch zu verantworten und für städtische Eliten rezipierbar zu machen. Die philosophische Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums ist nicht nur eine Ergänzung der bisherigen Methoden und Fragestellungen, sondern sie verändert unsere Wahrnehmung der Texte: Sie sind nicht nur religiöse, sondern auch denkerische Leistungen, die Menschen damals wie heute unmittelbar ansprechen.

To appropriate, to change and to partially dissolve established hermeneutical systems like Judaism or Hellenism in all their varieties, Johannine theology had to feature connectivity, plausibility, and rather unconventional or surprising aspects. In the context of competing systems and the contemporary cultural-religious debates it had to assert and prove itself. This largely entailed participation in the religious and philosophical discourses to justify the new belief intellectually and to make the belief adoptable for the urban elites. The philosophical interpretation of the Gospel of John is not only an addition to the common methods and questions, but it modifies our cognition of these texts: they are not merely religious, but intellectual achievements as well, which appeal to people directly in their historical context as much as they still appeal to us today.

Between Torah and Stoa

How Could Readers Have Understood the Johannine Logos?*

Jörg Frey

I. The Enigma of the Logos in Scholarship

The λόγος, as a term and as a concept, stands as an enigma in the beginning of John's Gospel: it has been an eye-catcher and a *crux interpretum*. It has inspired theories about the historical background of the gospel, about its prologue, or about an alleged "Logos-hymn," raising questions about the relationship between the prologue and the gospel narrative and stimulating the reception of John beyond the circles of theology and church among philosophers and poets, as perhaps most prominently in Goethe's *Faust*.[1] The philosophical "vibrations" of the term were already perceived in antiquity, and they remain in the background of the debate between philosophy and theology.[2] Is John a gospel acceptable for a philosopher (more than the

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[1] In his *Faust I*, one of the greatest works of German poetry, Goethe presents his protagonist Faust seeking for revelation in the New Testament, reading John 1:1, and wrestling with the translation or interpretation of the 'word':

"Geschrieben steht: 'Im Anfang war das Wort!' / Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort? / Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen, / Ich muß es anders übersetzen, / Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin. / Geschrieben steht: Im Anfang war der *Sinn*. / Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile, / Daß deine Feder sich nicht übereile! / Ist es der *Sinn*, der alles wirkt und schafft? / Es sollte stehn: Im Anfang war die *Kraft*! / Doch, auch indem ich dieses niederschreibe, / Schon warnt mich was, daß ich dabei nicht bleibe. / Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh ich Rat / Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die *Tat*!" (J. W. von Goethe, *Faust I*, vv. 1224–37)

[2] Thus, an explicitly philosophical commentary on John can just translate λόγος by "reason"/"Vernunft" as when John 1:14 is rendered "Die Vernunft wurde Mensch" by

other gospels)?[3] Does the "Logos-gospel" give reason for a reason-oriented concept of Christianity?[4] And how reasonable or logos-oriented can Christianity ever be? These issues have been debated at least since the Enlightenment.

1. The Introduction of the History-of-Religions Perspective

From the beginning of critical scholarship,[5] the λόγος in the opening of the gospel has been the focus of interpreters' search for the history-of-religions background of the gospel.[6] But the whole range of possible history-of-religions contexts had already been referred to in the learned collections of parallels in the late 17th century. Whereas the Hebraist John Lightfoot comprehensively adduced Jewish, especially targumic parallels,[7] Hugo Grotius in his *Annotationes* also pointed to Heraclitus and to the Orphics, the Stoics, the Platonists, and of course Philo.[8] The "dichotomy" of later scholarship between Jewish and Hellenistic explanations, which was often due to the field of expertise of the respective interpreters, is already prefigured in these earliest collections.

Roughly a century later, scholars began to draw critical conclusions from their observations. While most interpreters still adhered to the traditional view of an anti-gnostic purpose of the gospel, Johann David Michaelis first

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G. Keil, *Das Johannesevangelium: Ein philosophischer und theologischer Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 13, 18–19.

[3] Cf. the clear verdict by the Idealist philosopher J. G. Fichte, "Anweisung zum seligen Leben," in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke* (ed. I. H. Fichte; 11 vols.; Berlin: Veit, 1834–46), 5:476–77, where he writes, "Nur mit Johannes kann der Philosoph zusammenkommen, denn dieser allein hat Achtung für die Vernunft, und beruft sich auf den Beweis, den der Philosoph allein gelten lässt: den inneren."

[4] In this regard, Pope Benedict XVI quoted John 1:1–2 in his famous and controversial Regensburg lecture – Benedikt XVI. et al., *Glaube und Vernunft: Die Regensburger Vorlesung* (Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2006).

[5] For the history of interpretation of the prologue, see the most detailed study by M. Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos: Studien zum Verhältnis des Johannesprologs zum Corpus des Evangeliums und zu 1 Joh* (NTA NF 20; Münster: Aschendorff, 1988).

[6] Cf. the account of history-of-religions studies in J. Frey, "Auf der Suche nach dem Kontext des vierten Evangeliums: Zur religions- und traditionsgeschichtlichen Einordnung," in idem, *Studien zu den Johanneischen Schriften*, Vol. 1: *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten* (ed. J. Schlegel; WUNT 307; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 45–88, esp. 52–55.

[7] J. Lightfoot, *Horae hebraicae et talmudicae impensae in Evangelium S. Johannis* (London: Th. Roycroft, 1671), 51–53. See also the English translation: idem, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae, Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations* (ed. R. Gandell; London: Oxford University Press, 1859).

[8] H. Grotius, *Annotationes in Quatuor Evangelia et Acta Apostolorum* (Opera Omnia Theologica II/1; Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1679), 474 and 478.

assumed that in presenting the λόγος as a divine person, the evangelist might have adapted his language to that of the gnostics.[9] His contemporary Johann Gottfried Herder held the view that even the term λόγος should not be explained from the classical Greek tradition but rather from an oriental type of language that the evangelist apparently adopted.[10] Only slightly later, the Philonic or Alexandrian perspective was introduced for explaining the Johannine teaching about the λόγος, and critics concluded from the alleged knowledge of Philo and Alexandrian philosophy or from Platonic parallels that the evangelist could not be from Palestine nor even be a Jew.[11] Thus, the quest for the origins of the Johannine "Logos doctrine" and the dichotomy between Hellenistic philosophy and biblical or Jewish tradition were at the center of Johannine interpretation from the very beginnings of modern historical research.

In the later periods of critical interpretation, the respective views of the meaning and function of the λόγος were decisive in various ways. For the founder of the 19th century Tübingen school, Ferdinand Christian Baur, who understood the λόγος in Greek and particularly in Idealistic terms, the whole gospel was an exposition of the idea of the λόγος rather than an account of real history. The fact that Jesus is said to be the divine λόγος could give reason to the idealistic interpretation of the gospel according to which the whole narrative is simply an explication of the Logos idea.[12] In later research, the history-of-religions concept of the λόγος was decisive

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[9] J. D. Michaelis, *Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des neuen Bundes* (4th ed.; 2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1788), 2:1137.

[10] J. G. Herder, "Von Gottes Sohn, der Welt Heiland: Nach Johannes Evangelium: Nebst einer Regel der Zusammenstimmung unserer Evangelien aus ihrer Entstehung und Ordnung" (1797), in idem, *Sämtliche Werke* (ed. B. Suphan; 33 vols.; reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), 19:253–424 (cf. 274–304 on the prologue). The oriental source that fascinated the learned world at that time was the Avesta, published only a few years before in 1771: A. H. Anquetil du Perron, *Zend-Avesta: Ouvrage de Zoroastre* (Paris: Tilliard, 1771), cf. J. Frey, "Herder und die Evangelien," in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Aspekte seines Lebenswerkes* (ed. M. Kessler and V. Leppin; AKG 92; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 47–91.

[11] Thus C. T. Bretschneider, *Probabilia de evangelii et epistolarum Joannis, Apostoli, indole et origine eruditorum iudiciis modeste subiecit* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1820), 83: "Docetur, probabile esse, evangelii auctorem neque palaestinensem neque iudaeum fuisse." Similarly also H. Ch. Ballenstedt, *Philo und Johannes, oder fortgesetzte Anwendung des Philo zur Interpretation der Johanneischen Schriften, mit besonderer Hinsicht auf die Frage: Ob Johannes der Verfasser der ihm zugeschriebenen Schriften sein könne* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1812), 28–29. See also Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 9–10 (n. 5).

[12] F. Ch. Baur, "Über die *Composition* und den Charakter des Johannesevangeliums," *Theologische Jahrbücher* (Tübingen) 3 (1844): 1–191, 397–475, 615–700 (11 and 616); cf. J. Frey, "Ferdinand Christian Baur und die Johannesauslegung," in *Ferdinand Christian Baur und die Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (ed. M. Bauspieß, Ch. Landmesser, and D. Lincicum; WUNT 333; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 227–58.

for the contextualization of the gospel, whether in Philonic (and Greek) terms,[13] or more and more in oriental and gnostic terms.[14] In an early article, Rudolf Bultmann explained the term on the background of a Jewish myth of "Wisdom."[15] But as that myth could be located within the wider context of oriental mythology, he further developed that interpretation to his idea of the "Gnostic redeemer myth"[16] so that the Logos was finally considered a redeemer figure within the wider framework of gnostic mythology.

A small minority of scholars who located the gospel within Palestinian-Jewish thought had more difficulties to explain the view of the λόγος. But at least with some influence, C. F. Burney could explain the Johannine use of the term as a developed version of the notion of the "Memra," the hypostatic word of God, in the Palestinian Targumim.[17] But even though more recent research, partly due to the Qumran discoveries, has pushed the Johannine history-of-religions context more towards Jewish traditions, the Scrolls have not provided the decisive clue for the interpretation of the term ὁ λόγος in John. Whereas most commentators stress the influence of Jewish Wisdom tradition in the prologue (or some kind of Logos hymn), the enigma of the term ὁ λόγος still remains, and the quest for its precise meaning and function is still debated with a range of meanings between the biblical "Word of God" in the Torah or the Creation and the philosophical notion of the Logos in Platonism and Stoicism.

At least the early interpreters of the prologue in the second century, especially the Valentinians (e.g. Heracleon and Ptolemaeus) perceived and

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[13] Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Johanneisches Evangelium* (HKNT 4/1; Freiburg: Mohr, 1890), 6–8; idem, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Vol. 2 (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1911), 409–21.

[14] Cf. W. Heitmüller, "Das Johannes-Evangelium," in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (ed. J. Weiß; 2 vols.; 2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907–08), 2:697–99, and W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenäus* (2d ed.; FRLANT 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), 304–16. Rudolf Bultmann explicitly rejects the Philonic interpretation in the beginning of his influential essay: "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen" (1925), in idem, *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (ed. E. Dinkler; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 55–104 (55). See also the change from the first to the second volume of the work of J. Grill, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des vierten Evangeliums* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1902, 1923).

[15] Cf. R. Bultmann, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium" (1923), in idem, *Exegetica*, 10–36 (n. 14).

[16] Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums" (n. 14).

[17] C. F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922), 126, on the teaching on the Logos see 37–43 (with an Aramaic reconstruction of the first verses of the prologue).

considered some of the philosophical problems linked with the term when they introduced further distinctions in their reading of John 1:1–5 (e.g. between the truly Divine λόγος and the λόγος that formed the material world [1:3] or was incarnate [1:14]). Thus, the early reception history points to some ambiguity in the term that calls for thorough consideration.

2. The Presentation of the Logos in Some Recent Commentaries

A brief survey of some of the more recent commentaries may show the various tracks of interpretation. These tracks are, of course, informed in part by the respective views on an alleged pre-Johannine tradition, a Logos hymn and its textual form. In the present essay, I leave aside the debate about such a hymn because, in my view, the existence of a pre-Johannine source for the prologue cannot be ascertained. Thus, we can never be sure whether a text without the verses John 1:6–8, 15 and some other alleged additions ever existed.

With regard to the meaning and background(s) of the term ὁ λόγος, the discussion in recent commentaries reveals a wide diversity of views while only a minority of the authors provides sufficient information.

Generally abandoned is the gnostic or Mandean interpretation suggested by Bultmann since the 1920s with its integration of Jewish wisdom speculation into a wider, allegedly pre-Christian gnostic myth.[18] The predominance of Bultmann's view was brought to an end by the work of Rudolf Schnackenburg, who in the first volume of his commentary convincingly demonstrated that the Hellenistic-Jewish parallels are much closer to the Johannine texts.[19] Since then, most commentators point primarily to the Jewish wisdom tradition and to Philo for explaining the choice of the term and its meaning so that the wide range of possible backgrounds is left aside.

Based on the exegetical argument that the Jewish wisdom theology underlies the prologue as a whole, Michael Theobald merely presents a brief excursus with a few parallels from the Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, and some New Testament texts.[20] Similarly, Johannes Beutler, in the most recent German commentary, points to the Scriptures,

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[18] Cf. the articles mentioned above nn. 15 and 16, and the comprehensive discussion in Bultmann's commentary: R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (21st ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 5–19, with broader information and the argument that neither biblical nor Hellenistic-Jewish thought sufficiently explains the term in the prologue. For criticism of Bultmann's history-of-religions reconstruction see J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, Vol. I: *Ihre Probleme im Spiegel der Forschung seit Reimarus* (WUNT 96; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 129–50.

[19] R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Vol. I (HTKNT IV/1; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1965), 257–69 (269). At that time, Schnackenburg not yet dared to explicitly doubt the existence of Bultmann's redeemer myth, which was deconstructed only later by authors such as Carsten Colpe, Roland Bergmeier and others (see further Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I*, 133–37 [n. 18]).

[20] M. Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes: Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 117–19.

the Wisdom tradition, and Philo,[21] whereas the value of the Nag Hammadi texts is briefly characterized as doubtful and philosophical texts are not mentioned at all. Most one-sided is Klaus Wengst's presentation of only Jewish and predominantly rabbinic analogies for the "hypostatic" use of the term "the word" while he ignores the Philonic and, even more, the Greek philosophical tradition,[22] leaving readers ignorant of the idea that the term had any relevance to, or that it could have stimulated echoes in, the Greco-Roman world. The reason for such a selective presentation is the decision to locate John completely within an inner-Jewish context. The problem, however, is that Wengst refers mostly to rabbinic and talmudic texts, which are too late to provide a historically plausible context for understanding the Fourth Gospel, especially if the work cannot be located in Syria or Palestine but rather in the Jewish diaspora, probably in Asia Minor.

In contrast with those approaches, Udo Schnelle programmatically states that any one-sided explanation of the gospel is insufficient.[23] His brief excursus thus begins with only a few remarks on the biblical texts about the divine word in creation and history, but then refers especially to Heraclitus and the Stoics and, as a mediator of the Greek ideas, to Hellenistic Judaism (Wisdom of Solomon and Philo). The widest panorama of parallels is presented in the learned, but somewhat unsystematic, excursus in the commentary by Folker Siegert,[24] who discusses ideas from Old-Egyptian religion (with some relevance for the Hermetic texts) down to patristic testimonies of Jewish-Christian interpretations and to the Targumim.

British scholarship has often looked in other directions than German exegesis. The most famous example is Bultmann's great contemporary, C. H. Dodd, who provides a thorough chapter with a balanced view in which Hellenistic Judaism plays the most important role but also texts such as the *Poimandres* or the *Odes of Solomon* are included.[25] The influential commentary by C. K. Barrett also presents a very wide horizon of texts and possible influences, including especially the references to other early Christian texts and considerations about the connection with the gospel narrative.[26]

John McHugh, in his unfinished commentary, also adopted the same scholarly tradition of a wide history-of-religions perspective. He opens his exegesis by presenting five options of interpreting the term: Platonic, Stoic, Neoplatonic, biblical, and targumic.[27] In a separate excursus, however, he narrows the view.[28] After a lengthy discussion of Bultmann's Mandean explanation and some hints to the thought world of the *Poimandres*, the *Odes of Solomon*, some Nag Hammadi texts, and Philo, McHugh finally argues for a pure

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[21] J. Beutler, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2013), 86–87.

[22] K. Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 1. Teilband: *Kapitel 1–10* (TKNT 4/1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 44.

[23] Vgl. U. Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (4th ed.; THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009), 40: "kann nicht monokausal erklärt werden." See also the conference volume *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums* (ed. J. Frey and U. Schnelle; WUNT 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[24] F. Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt: Wiederherstellung und Kommentar* (SIJD 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 647–70.

[25] C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 263–85.

[26] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 152–55.

[27] J. McHugh, *John 1–4* (ICC; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 7–9.

[28] Ibid., 91–96.

inner-biblical understanding: the only background for understanding the λόγος in the prologue is the Old Testament in Greek and Hebrew together with the Aramaic translations, and "in calling Jesus the word made flesh, the evangelist was equating him with the Memra."[29]

Craig Keener displays a similar manner of exegesis in his commentary where he presents and discusses an abundance of parallels,[30] but in the end, he favors a merely inner-Jewish interpretation which is considered to fit John's education and intended audience.[31] In Keener's view, the christological purpose of the Johannine prologue is to relate Jesus to the Torah and to present him as "the supreme revelation of God,"[32] the "final word."[33] Thus, he considers the utilization of the λόγος to serve precisely that christological purpose. In consequence, the meaning of the Logos is simply "Torah": the Logos *is* the Torah so that Keener can ask why John did not present Jesus as the νόμος.[34] Here a debatable exegetical verdict and some even more doubtful presuppositions about the evangelist, his community, and the inner-Jewish character of the discussions between the community and its opponents finally determine the meaning of the term λόγος in John 1:1.

If this solution were correct, the extensive presentation of history-of-religions material would be useless. But the identification of the Logos with the Torah is certainly too narrow and, in view of some other recent commentaries, there is reason to reopen the window and more openly discuss the relevance of the parallels from the gospel's various contexts.

3. Reopening the Window: The History of Religions and the Reception Perspective

Historical exegesis (in its classical form) aims at determining the intention behind the use of a term and which meaning can be considered most appropriate to the text and thus also most probably corresponds to the author's intention. But we should not too quickly limit our horizon by a general hermeneutical decision[35] or a certain hypothesis about the author and his audience.[36] Even a Jewish audience might not have been totally unaware of more general Greek usages and nuances of the term,[37] which

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[29] Ibid., 95.

[30] C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:339–63.

[31] Ibid., 343.

[32] Ibid., 363. Cf. on the Christological purpose of the prologue ibid., 338–39.

[33] Ibid., 364.

[34] Ibid., 361–62.

[35] Thus Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 1:1 (n. 22), who simply wants to make visible the Jewish context of the gospel, although this results in a historically problematic one-sidedness. Moreover, he anachronistically includes rabbinic texts which are much later than the gospel. See my critical review in *BZ* 43 (2002): 137–40.

[36] Thus Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:171–232 (n. 30) on the Jewishness of John.

[37] Numerous diaspora Jewish texts clearly show the interaction of diaspora Judaism with Hellenistic culture and thought (not only Philo but also Wisdom of Solomon, 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, the *Sibylline Oracles*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Pseudo-Phocylides,

were by no means limited to a "higher" philosophical level of education. And if we take into account that the circle of first (and second) readers of the Fourth Gospel might have come from a wider circle, Jewish and non-Jewish, in the Greco-Roman diaspora, we should not presuppose that they were totally unaware of Stoic or other popular ideas about the Logos.[38]

Another aspect to be considered is the complex interface between the meaning of a text (or the author's intention) and the meaning grasped by the readers or even the "resonances" evoked in their minds. Modern hermeneutical reflection has stimulated sensitivity to the differences between the two and, especially, to the role of the readers in "creating" the meaning of a text. Thus, the context in which a text is read or the readers' prior knowledge becomes more important, and the manner early readers understand a text may vary considerably due to different cultural backgrounds. History-of-religions interpretation should, therefore, not only ask for "the" background of the text, a given term, or motif in the framework of the text or in the mind of its author but also consider the contexts of its first (and possibly later) readers and the interrelation between both. Such an inquiry, inspired by reader-response research, will necessarily consider a larger plurality of horizons and not limit the number of relevant contexts in advance by considering, for example, only biblical texts or only those from the Jewish wisdom tradition.

This is particularly necessary for the opening of a text which is read before the larger textual universe is unfolded. And even if the audience or readers of the prologue or the gospel may perceive from the continuation of the text that there are remarkable differences between the gospel's views and the paradigms of ancient philosophy, they initially might appreciate the "echoes" of the term when the opening of the gospel is read. Furthermore, an ancient author who deliberately designed such an opening would possibly be aware of some of the nuances implied or of the resonances that could be evoked by his textual design. We should at least not exclude such a possibility for the author of the Fourth Gospel.

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etc.). This should also be presupposed for Jewish communities in Asia Minor and for the groups of Jesus followers that developed in their context.

[38] See also L. Abramowski, "Der Logos in der altchristlichen Theologie," in *Spätantike und Christentum* (ed. C. Colpe; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 189–201 (193): "Für hellenisierte Juden war die Konvergenz von alttestamentlichem und stoischem Logos naheliegend wegen der vielfältigen kosmologischen Konnotationen des Logos, die zur schöpferischen Kraft des göttlichen Wortes des Gottes Israels nur zu gut zu passen schien."

II. The Early Reception as an Indication of Potential Philosophical Reading Contexts

An additional argument – or at least an illustration of the problem – may be taken from the reception history of the gospel and its prologue in the second and third centuries. Admittedly, the reception history cannot determine the meaning or the spectrum of meanings of a given text and recipients 50 or 100 years later may have read the text within a rather different intellectual framework than that of the gospel itself. This does not preclude, however, that their reading can point us to some aspects of the intellectual world in which the gospel was originally written and heard. In the present context, we can only focus on the second century and have to leave the third aside (with especially Origen and his commentary), but this focus includes at least the first (and, for the early reception, the most significant) recipients.

As scholarship has noticed in the last decades, the early reception of the Fourth Gospel was by no means limited to gnostics.[39] Instead, John was also vividly received in what we may call mainstream Christianity.[40] The influence of the Johannine tradition can be traced from Papias[41] down to Irenaeus:[42] the gospel is widely attested among the apologists and some fathers before Irenaeus, such as Tatian, Melito, and Theophilus,[43] in a number of apocryphal gospels from Papyrus Egerton 2 to the *Gospel of Peter*,[44] and also

[39] Cf. C. E. Hill, "The Fourth Gospel in the Second Century: The Myth of Orthodox Johannophobia," in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed. J. Lierman; WUNT 2/219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 135–69 (136–37).

[40] See M. Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch, mit einem Anhang zur Apokalypse von Jörg Frey* (WUNT 67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 9–95; T. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert: Studien zur vorirenäischen Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-gnostischer Literatur* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 2; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000); C. E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); C. Uhrig, *"Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden": Zur Rezeption von Joh 1,14a und zur Theologie der Fleischwerdung in der griechischen vornizänischen Patristik* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 63; Münster: Aschendorff, 2004); B. Mutschler, *Das Corpus Johanneum bei Irenäus von Lyon* (WUNT 189; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); T. Rasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (NovTSup 132; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010).

[41] See C. E. Hill, "'The Orthodox Gospel': The Reception of John in the Great Church Prior to Irenaeus," in *The Legacy of John*, 234–300 (n. 40); ibid., 242, a list of 'orthodox users' of John. On Papias see ibid., 285–94, and Hengel, *Frage*, 75–95 (n. 40), and also R. J. Bauckham, "Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel," *JTS* 44 (1993): 24–69.

[42] Cf. Mutschler, *Corpus Johanneum* (n. 40) and idem, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe: Studien zur Schriftauslegung bei Irenäus von Lyon* (STAC 21; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

[43] Cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 55–120 (n. 40), and Hengel, *Frage*, 21–37, 61–67 (n. 40).

[44] On the use of John in the apocryphal gospels, see L. R. Zelyck, *John among the Other Gospels* (WUNT 2/347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); on *Acts of John* see

in some Nag Hammadi texts.[45] At roughly the same time as Papias, the gospel story seems to be received in the secondary ending of Mark (16:9–20) where the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene is mentioned.[46] The gospel might already be known to Basilides[47] and to Valentinus,[48] but this is hard to ascertain as they do not quote it verbatim. A more extensive use of Johannine material is visible around the mid-second century in the *Epistola Apostolorum*, in Papyrus Egerton 2 and, then, in Justin Martyr.[49] Of all Johannine texts, the one most received and discussed in the second century is the prologue,[50] but only vv. 1–5 and 14 receive specific attention.[51] Thus, the idea of the Logos in its relationship to the world was in focus in the early reception of John.

On the other hand, a number of second century texts mention the Logos or develop a teaching about the Logos without clear references to John. Ignatius (*Magn.* 8:2) mentions that Jesus Christ is God's Logos that "comes forth from silence" (ὅς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών), which may simply refer to Gen 1:1–3[52] but provides a certain analogy to the Fourth Gospel showing how easily Christ could be called the "Logos."[53]

I. Czachesz, "The Gospel of the Acts of John: Its Relation to the Fourth Gospel," in *The Legacy of John*, 49–72 (n. 40).

[45] Cf. W. Röhl, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums in christlich-gnostischen Schriften aus Nag Hammadi* (EHS.T 428; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991); see also Nagel, *Rezeption*, 357–472 (n. 40), and some of the articles in *The Legacy of John* (n. 40).

[46] This is shown convincingly by J. A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2/212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 148–49; see also Hill, "The Fourth Gospel in the Second Century," 162–63 (n. 39).

[47] Thus Hengel, *Frage*, 40 (n. 40), who concedes, however, that this author preferred the Synoptics, especially Luke, but assumes that one fragment from Hegemonius' *Acta Archelai* presupposes Gen 1:1 and also John 1:1–5. Cf., however, W. A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule: Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (WUNT 83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 219–49, who remains reluctant with regard to the use of John 1:5 (ibid., 232, n. 47).

[48] Thus according to Tertullian, *Praescr.* 38:10; cf. Hengel, *Frage*, 41–42 (n. 40), and C. Markschies, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* (WUNT 65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 195. Most important is frg. 7 from Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.42.2 (on this see Markschies, ibid., 205–17) with the appearance of "the logos" as a child.

[49] Cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 94–117 (n. 40), esp. 96–100. At least Justin's allusion to the Nicodemus dialogue in *1 Apol.* 61:4–5 is, in my view, a clear reception of John.

[50] See for more details Nagel, *Rezeption*, 479–81 (n. 40). More than a third of all Johannine references in Irenaeus is from the prologue, and Origen devotes even five books of his commentary to the 18 verses. Cf. B. Mutschler, "John and His Gospel in the Mirror of Irenaeus of Lyons," in *The Legacy of John*, 319–44 (331) (n. 40).

[51] Nagel, *Rezeption*, 479–81 (n. 40).

[52] Cf. H. Löhr, "Logos," *RAC* 23 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2010), 359.

[53] Other texts from the Apostolic Fathers in which aspects of the incarnation are in view can be omitted here (cf., generally, Uhrig, *"Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden"* [n 40]). Interesting is *2 Clem.* 9:5 where the author seems to refer to John 1:14 but replaces the Logos by Spirit ("Christ the Lord who saved us who was first spirit, became flesh …"). Cf. Abramowski, "Logos," 191 (n. 38).

In the protreptic tractate *Ad Diognetum* (chs. 11–12), there are frequent references to the Logos as revealer and teacher. The term refers to Christ,[54] but in a very broad range of meanings: the Logos is sent from heaven (*Diogn*. 7:2; 10:2; 11:3); he reveals the mysteries of the Father (11:2); he was "from the beginning" (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), appeared as "new," and is again born in the hearts of the saints (11:4); he is "the son" (11:5), "eternal," and speaks through the Christian teacher in the community. But apart from some words that might be inspired by the Johannine tradition, the whole teaching about the Logos in this protreptic tractate could be developed from basically a Greek philosophical background.

The *Odes of Solomon* articulate a kind of Logos Christology. Here it is said that: "the dwelling-place of the word is man" (lit. in Syriac: "son of man"),[55] the "word" is closely linked with light and truth, and the word of God is "a soteriological power which acts creatively and liberatingly."[56] Although an influence of John 1 and of Gen 1 is quite probable, this does not preclude that contemporary Hellenistic doctrines could also be shaping the manner in which the poetic author speaks about the Logos.

The latter influence is quite clear for Justin Martyr where the Logos becomes the central term to guide the reader from a general (Middle Platonic and Stoic) concept of reason to Christ, the Logos: Here, the Logos is the norm of a reasonable and philosophical life (e.g. ὀρθὸς λόγος), but it is also the Word of God, in the Scriptures and in prophecy, and thus a kind of "hypostasis." Logos can also be a name of the power in the beginning according to Gen 1:1 and Prov 8:22 (cf. *Dial*. 61:1; 128:2), i.e. another name for Wisdom. The Logos has appeared in the Old Testament as fire or angel (*1 Apol.* 63:10) and became a human being through a virgin (*1 Apol.* 63:16), and he is also present and dwells in the believers (*1 Apol.* 32:8; *Dial*. 54:1–2).[57] The Logos is called θεός (in contrast with the Father who is ὁ θεός) or θεὸς ἕτερος (*Dial*. 56:11);[58] he has the second place after the Father and before the Spirit (*1 Apol.* 60:7);[59] he is the Father's firstborn son[60] and mediator of the creation (*1 Apol.* 59:2–5; 64:5; *Dial* 76:7). John could inspire all these ideas, but they are also easily developed from Philo and the Bible, in the context of Greek philosophy and in dispute with contemporary Jewish views. For Justin's idea of the λόγος σπερματικός, this is the most probable explanation.[61]

Although the reference to John is more intense in the later Apologists – Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus – these authors still conceptualize the Logos in philosophical terms. Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 5:1) explains John 1:1 in the sense that God was in the beginning, but the beginning was the δύναμις λόγου. In John 1:3, he does not stress the mediatorship of the Logos but the creatorship of God. Also, the translation of John 1:3 in

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[54] Cf. H. E. Lona, *An Diognet* (Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 8; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2001), 51–55.

[55] *Odes Sol.* 12:12; see M. Lattke, *Odes of Solomon* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 175–84.

[56] Thus Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 186 (n. 55).

[57] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:367 (n. 52).

[58] Cf. Philo's wording: δευτερὸς θεός, cf. F. Siegert, "Der Logos, 'älterer Sohn' des Schöpfers und 'zweiter Gott': Philons Logos und der Johannesprolog," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums*, 277–94 (n. 23).

[59] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:366 (n. 52).

[60] But πρωτότοκος, not μονογενής, as in John 1:18.

[61] But cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:360 (n. 52): "Unter der plausiblen Voraussetzung, dass Justin Johannes gekannt hat, kann die Theorie vom λ. σπερματικός auch als Auslegung und Fortschreibung von Joh. 1,9 gelesen werden."

the *Diatessaron* reads, "all things were made in him [sc. the Logos]," not through him.[62] According to Athenagoras, the world is made through the Logos and is also kept through him. The Logos comes forth to act as ἰδέα and ἐνέργεια in the matter – an explanation that is obviously shaped by Platonic views.[63] Theophilus, on the other hand, adduces the Stoic paradigm of the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (reason) and the λόγος προσφορικός (the spoken word) when explaining that God had the former in his inner mind and brought forth the latter with his σοφία.[64] The examples show that the early "orthodox" recipients of John read the gospel within a wide context of philosophical ideas. Thus also Justin's Logos Christology can be understood largely without a formative influence from the Johannine texts (although the Fourth Gospel was not unknown to Justin). Even in later authors, it is not a mere reception of John but rather a combination of Johannine and other (biblical and philosophical) ideas.

When looking briefly to the gnosticizing (esp. Valentinian) recipients who adopt the Johannine prologue more explicitly,[65] the impression is similar. Their interpretation – though quite different from "orthodox" views – is strongly shaped by philosophical ideas. The Logos from John 1:1 or 1:3 is now split into different parts and the unity between the transcendent Divine Logos and the Logos Incarnate is abandoned. Thus, Heracleon speculates whether the δι᾽ αὐτοῦ in John 1:3 should really mean that the Logos himself created the universe or whether it could also be read in the sense that another one (i.e. a demiurge) created through the power of the Logos: αὐτοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος ἕτερος ἐποίει.[66] Although Heracleon does not introduce gnostic mythology here, he seems interested in distancing the Divine Logos from the material world. Other Valentinian interpretations "open" the Johannine prologue for further distinctions. Thus the exegesis attributed to Ptolemaeus[67] reads John 1:1 as a testimony of three separate "divinities": God, the Logos, and the Beginning, thereby paving the way for a mythological reading by which the pleroma, or an emanative pattern of syzygies or aeons, can be found in the prologue.[68]

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[62] Cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 70–71 (n. 40); Löhr, *RAC* 23:373 (n. 52).

[63] Athenagoras, *Leg*. 10:2; cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 63–65 (n. 40) and Löhr, *RAC*, 373–74 (n. 52).

[64] Theophilus, *Ad Autol.* 2.10.2. Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:374–75 (n. 52); Abramowski, "Logos," 195–96 (n. 38).

[65] Cf. my article "The Johannine Logos and the References to the Creation of the World in Its Second Century Receptions," in *Les Judaïsmes dans tous leurs états aux Ier–IIIe siècles (les Judéens des synagogues, les chrétiens et les rabbins): Actes du colloque de Lausanne, 12–14 décembre 2012* (ed. C. Clivaz et al.; JAOC 5; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 221–44.

[66] Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 14:101–02; cf. A. Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 110–11. Ptolemaios' *Letter to Flora* provides a similar exegesis, which is quoted in Epiphanius (cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 294–99 [n. 40], and T. Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Prologue's Valentinian Exegesis," in *The Legacy of John*, 146–58 [n. 40]), according to which the perfect God is only the initiator, whereas the mediator or demiurge carried out the work of the creation (7:4).

[67] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.1–9 (in Greek in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.27.1–16); cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 281–94 (n. 40), and Rasimus, "Ptolemaeus and the Prologue's Valentinian Exegesis," 158–69 (n. 66).

[68] A very similar pattern is present in the *Excerpts from Theodotus* presented by Clement where the emanation of the pleroma is also linked with the text of the prologue (*Exc.*

The brief survey among "orthodox" and gnosticizing authors demonstrates how early Christian authors in the second century read and interpreted the term ὁ λόγος in the light of the philosophical discussions and in relation to philosophical traditions. Of course, their intentions and their contexts differed from that of John, and in Justin, especially, we can see a different paradigm of reasoning than in the Fourth Gospel.[69] But in spite of these differences, the early reception history can open our eyes to the wider horizon of the term λόγος or the "echoes" that could have been perceived when the prologue was read. The prologue stimulated cosmological interests (also in its connection with Gen 1:1) that influenced its reception and interpretation. Although those interests are not yet visible in John, the text of the prologue, with its utilization of the term ὁ λόγος, addresses a universal dimension that could easily be connected with the wider discourse about the world and creation that goes far beyond the biblical discourse about God's word in revelation and Torah. The question must thus be reversed: what does it mean for an understanding of Christ if he is associated with the universal λόγος, including its cosmological and epistemological aspects? In John, Jesus is presented in such a universal or even cosmic framework, not merely as the incarnation of the biblical word of God or the Torah, and early readers in the second and third centuries could perceive, and be attracted by, those universal dimensions.

Thus, it is mandatory to include the Greek and philosophical dimensions of the term in the history-of-religions interpretation of the Johannine Logos, although the continuation of the prologue, then, focuses on the Logos' incarnation and the term's christological meaning. The question that emerges is: how might readers have perceived the wider semantic potential of the text and how or to what degree could they have grasped its christological focus?

6:1–4); cf. Nagel, *Rezeption*, 341–57 (n. 40), esp. 344–45. Theodotus also distinguishes between a heavenly Christ who stays in the bosom of the Father (= the Monogenes: John 1:18) and another one, who appeared on earth (ὀφθείς) and of whom John 1:14 only says ὡς μονογενοῦς (*Exc.* 7:3).

[69] This is correctly stated by M. Theobald, "Im Anfang – das Wort: Zum Johannesprolog," in idem, *Studien zum Corpus Iohanneum* (WUNT 247; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 38, in critical debate with Pope Benedict XVI who claimed John 1:1 as Scriptural ground for a concept of "reasonable" Christianity or an ultimate harmony of faith and reason, cf. Benedikt XVI., *Glaube und Vernunft* (n. 4).

III. Greco-Roman Contexts

As the rise of a Logos Christology in the second century shows, the term was at least attractive for educated readers and authors with a certain philosophical or cosmological interest. Due to the terminological differences between the prologue and the gospel narrative, some scholars have even suggested that the term at the beginning of the prologue should intentionally serve as a kind of philosophical lure to mediate the non-philosophical work to a more educated readership.[70] Although such a view might underestimate the intellectual quality of the gospel narrative and draw on an inappropriate contrast between the "simple" gospel and philosophical thought and also between the Jewish gospel and its later Hellenization, the philosophical reception calls for a more thorough look at the contexts in which the term could be used and with which it could be connected by its first readers.[71]

1. The Wide Range of Meanings

For the Greek term λόγος, the range of meanings is particularly wide. According to the still unsurpassed *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the term, derived from the verb λέγειν, can convey the notions of "collection" (in some derivatives), "calculation," "account," "reflection," "narrative," "word," "speech," "reason," "mind," or "thought."[72] "Thought, word, matter, nature, being and norm … are all brought into a comprehensive interrelation in the λόγος concept."[73] Λόγος may thus appear in a contrast to μῦθος (i.e. narrative fiction or poetry) and may be synonymous with νόμος or even ἀλήθεια. In later antiquity it can even be the hypostasis of a deity.[74]

It is not unimportant to note that from the beginning in *one* decisive way biblical and Johannine usage employs the term as it is used in Greek

[70] Thus the characterization of Harnack's view in M. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 26 (n. 5) ("ein metaphysischer Lockvogel"). Harnack's view is presented in A. von Harnack, "Über das Verhältniß des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk," *ZTK* 2 (1892): 189–231.

[71] For the following paragraphs, cf. in particular H. Kleinknecht, "λέγω κτλ B: The Logos in the Greek and Hellenistic World," *TDNT* 4:80–91; H. Leisegang, "Logos," *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft*, vol. 13/1 (Stuttgart: Druckenmüller, 1926), 1035–81; W. R. Inge, "Logos," *ERE* 8:133–38; K. Hierodiakonou, "Logos 1: Philosophisch," *DNP* 7:401–05; G. Verbeke, "Logos 1," *HWP* 5:491–99. Löhr, *RAC* 23:327–432 (n. 52); G. Ch. Stead, "Logos," *TRE* 21:432–44 (433–35).

[72] Cf. the accounts by A. Debrunner, "λέγω κτλ A," *TDNT* 4:73–75, and Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:77–80 (n. 71).

[73] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:83 (n. 71).

[74] Cf. ibid., 81.

philosophy, namely to denote "an address or a word of creative power."[75] This marks an important difference and is a strong argument for the view that an exclusive dependence on the Greek philosophical tradition cannot be assumed. But at the outset of the gospel, as it opens with ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, all the notions mentioned are potentially evoked. Thus, before narrowing the significance of the term in favor of a merely biblical or christological meaning, we have to consider the term's long history and that it provides numerous links with Greek texts and traditions, not only of the most prominent philosophical authors but also of more popular philosophical and religious thought.

The term gained interest in mathematics, grammar, logic and rhetoric, anthropology or psychology, metaphysics or cosmology, ethics, and finally in Greek (and then also Jewish and Christian) "theology."[76] For the present purpose, we can leave aside the merely logical and grammatical usages and focus on the philosophical (cosmological, anthropological) and theological usages of the term.

As a basic term of Greek philosophy, λόγος combines in one word two quite different aspects: the rational activity of collecting, understanding, and expressing things or their meaning and, second, a metaphysical reality, or even a cosmological entity,[77] or, as Goethe has phrased, "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält."[78]

2. Greek Philosophical Dimensions of the Term

a) Heraclitus and the Rise of the Λόγος Concept[79]

While it may be a coincidence, the "career" of the term λόγος started with the Ephesian philosopher Heraclitus (ca. 500 B.C.E.) whose views were later adopted especially by the Stoics. The connection with Heraclitus was also noticed by the Neoplatonist Amelios, the first pagan philosopher who quotes John's prologue.[80] Although Heraclitus was well-known in antiqui-

[75] Cf. ibid., 78.

[76] Cf. Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1036 (n. 71).

[77] Cf. Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:80–81 (n. 71).

[78] Goethe, *Faust I*, vv. 382–383.

[79] Cf. comprehensively D. Bremer and R. Dilcher, "Heraklit," in *Die Philosophie der Antike*, Vol. I: *Frühgriechische Philosophie 2* (ed. H. Flashar et al.; Basel: Schwabe, 2013), 601–56; further E. Kurtz, *Interpretationen zu den Logos-Fragmenten Heraklits* (Spudasmata 17; Hildesheim/New York: Olms, 1971); M. Bartling, *Der Logosbegriff bei Heraklit und seine Beziehung zur Kosmologie* (Göppinger akademische Beiträge 124; Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985); see the fragments in DK.

[80] Eusebius, *Praep. ev*. 11.18.26. On Amelios' reading of John's prologue, see S. Vollenweider, "Der Logos als Brücke vom Evangelium zur Philosophie: Der Johannesprolog in der Relektüre des Neuplatonikers Amelios," in *Studien zu Matthäus und Johannes – Études sur Matthieu et Jean* (FS Jean Zumstein; ed. A. Dettwiler et al.; ATANT 97;

ty and a number of philosophers commented on his works, we do not know whether John actually knew his ideas, which were considered dark and hard to understand. So it is a mere speculation that John adopted the term λόγος because Heraclitus was a local Ephesian philosopher.[81] It is also questionable to assume close correspondences between Heraclitus and biblical creation concepts[82] or even between Heraclitus and John.[83] In any case, his ideas about the Logos in the first century C.E. were mediated through later developments.

Heraclitus[84] not only presented his own teaching as a λόγος but also considered a universal and all-permeating λόγος to be the structuring principle of the world.[85] Although he took the term from contemporary usage, he was apparently the first one to develop a more comprehensive concept of the λόγος which was considered in a twofold manner: the λόγος is the meaning of the entire world and the principle according to which everything (including the cosmogony) happens (frg. 1), and the λόγος is the truth that humans can perceive and should follow (frg. 2). Thus the term provides a connection between the individual human and the world in its entirety,[86] microcosmos and macrocosmos. It is, however, a matter of dispute whether the cosmological or rather the anthropological aspect was the primary one for Heraclitus.

Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 377–97; see also H. Dörrie, "Une exégèse néoplatonicienne du prologue de l'évangile de Saint Jean," in idem, *Platonica minora* (Studia et Testimonia Antiqua 8; Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976), 491–507, and J. G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (STAC 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 149–50.

[81] Thus Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 649 (n. 24).

[82] Cf. Verbeke, *HWP* 5:492 (n. 71): "Es hat wenig Sinn, den L. Heraklits im Schöpfungsbericht der Bibel wiedererkennen zu wollen, die Grundauffassung des Verhältnisses L./Kosmos ist in beiden Texten verschieden."

[83] Schnelle suggests a close correspondence in, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 40 (n. 23): "Übereinstimmungen zwischen seinem Logosbegriff und dem Prolog bestehen in folgenden Punkten: a) Der Logos ist ewig und präexistent (Frg. 1). b) Der Logos ist Schöpfungsmittler (Frg. 1). c) Ablehnung und Aufnahme des Logos (Frg. 1; Frg. 50) d) Zwar wird bei Heraklit an keiner Stelle der Logos Gott oder göttlich genannt, aber dieses Attribut läßt sich bes. aus Frg. 67 und Frg. 30 erschließen." Schnelle, however, adopts these four points of alleged correspondence from a rather superficial work by B. Jendorff, *Der Logosbegriff: Seine philosophische Grundlegung bei Heraklit von Ephesus und seine theologische Indienstnahme durch Johannes den Evangelisten* (EHS.P 19; Frankfurt am Main etc., 1976), 75–84. Neither are the ideas of pre-existence or creation appropriate for Heraclitus, nor is the notion of "divinity" comparable. A sober scepticism against the reference to Heraclitus is already expressed in Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 152 (n. 26).

[84] Diogenes Laertius 9.7 (DK 22 A 1).

[85] Cf. G. Betegh, "Herakleitos," *DNP* 5:383.

[86] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:80 (n. 71).

As a cosmic principle, the λόγος is eternally valid (frg. 1: ἐόντος ἀεί),[87] but it should not be considered "pre-existent" since the world as such is apparently eternal, and a "creation" at the beginning of time is unknown to Heraclitus. Nor can we consider the λόγος "divine" because the fragments do not say this and the concept of Gods or the Divine in Heraclitus is very different from the biblical tradition and from the later Stoic concepts.[88] Humans have a share in the λόγος as they are able to perceive it, although, Heraclitus says, most of them actually do not follow the λόγος through the use of reason (frg. 2). But such a philosopher's view about the naïve life of the "normal" people is far removed from the Johannine view of the rejection and reception of the revelation of the Logos (John 1:9–10, 12). Thus, in spite of the crucial position of Heraclitus in the history of Logos thought, he is not easily comparable with John. The aspects of the Logos' cosmological and creative function were transmitted to later periods and thereby transformed by the Stoics and by later Platonism.

The two aspects united in Heraclitus' (admittedly dark) concept of the Logos were more sharply separated in other authors, contemporary and later.

For Parmenides, the λόγος is the reasonable argument.[89] For Sophists such as Gorgias, the λόγος is the psychagogic power of speech;[90] it is "a great ruler performing with the smallest and most invisible body(-part)." Socrates and Plato, instead, emphasize the aspect of the λόγος "as a basic fact in all life of society" and the κοινὸς λόγος creates fellowship by reasonable argument.[91] In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates even gives a threefold explanation of the term[92] as (a) making one's own thought clear through speech, (b) orderly enumerating the elements in a subject, and (c) defining the characteristics of the object in question. Thus, the term is used predominantly in its rhetorical or logical meaning, whereas its cosmological aspects, as are present in Heraclitus' concept, are not of any significance in Plato's thought.[93] They are incorporated only later, under Stoic influence, into Platonic concepts. In Aristotle, the term is mostly used in the fields of logic or "analytics," but not as a predominant term.[94]

Generally speaking, apart from Heraclitus and the Stoics, the Logos is not a prominent term in Greek philosophy.

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[87] It is questionable whether we should also call it "pre-existent" (thus Schnelle, *Evangelium nach Johannes*, 40 [n. 23]). The cosmological concepts are, in my view, too different.

[88] Cf. the considerations in Bremer and Dilcher, "Heraklit," 609 (n. 79).

[89] DK 28 B 7; cf. Verbeke, *HWP* 5:493 (n. 71).

[90] Gorgias, frg. 1 in DK; cf. Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:82 (n. 71).

[91] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:83 (n. 71).

[92] Plato, *Theaet.* 206d–208c.

[93] Cf. only Plato, *Tim.* 38c where it is said that the division of the time through sun, moon, and planets is from the λόγος and the διάνοια of the God (see also Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 11.16.1). Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:330 (n. 52).

[94] Cf. Ch. Stead, "Logos," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. 5 (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 817–19 (818).

b) The Stoic Concept

The Stoics, then, focused on the other part of Heraclitus' concept, the cosmological aspect of the λόγος. For them, λόγος "is a term for the ordered and teleologically oriented nature of the world,"[95] and such a λόγος can now be "equated with the concept of God" as well as with the εἱμαρμήνη or the νόμος, the "law of reason." In Cleanthes' famous hymn to Zeus,[96] the power ruling nature and humans is called the κοινὸς λόγος (line 12) and κοινὸς νόμος (line 24) but is considered an emanation or representation of Zeus himself through which he rules the world and all human deeds. In this respect, Origen can later quote the view that "God is ὁ πάντων τῶν ὄντων λόγος."[97]

In Stoic thought, the Logos is imagined in terms of matter, as fire, spirit, or αἰθήρ, being the active principle that shapes the merely passive matter. As such, it is the "power which extends throughout matter,"[98] the divine principle that orders and shapes the world.[99] The term λόγος σπερματικός shows that the Logos' function is considered an organic development. Such a view may be paralleled with "creation," but it is notably quite different from the idea of creation through the demiurge in Platonism[100] or also from the biblical idea of creation by God or through his Word.

According to the Stoics, the divine Logos extends through the world and, most fully, through humans. So, humans are, in the fullest sense, sharers of the Divine. The Divine dwells in them, and to a certain degree, the whole world, the κόσμος, which can also be said to be divine through its participation in the Logos. The Logos, or even God himself, extends throughout the world and through all humans. The Stoic teaching of the Logos can thus be characterized as a kind of "pantheism."[101]

As cosmic principle, the Logos is the "soul of the world," the universal law of nature and the common law (κοινὸς νόμος). As such, it enables humans to understand and to live according to their insight and also according to nature and its law. Thus, the Logos also becomes important for ethics as a guiding principle for life: it marks the way of the good and reasonable life.

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[95] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:84 (n. 71); cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.74.

[96] Stobaeus, *Flor.* 1.1.12; cf. J. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus* (STAC 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

[97] Origen, *Cels.* 5.14; quoted by Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:84 (n. 71).

[98] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:85 (n. 71) quoting Marcus Aurelius V 32.

[99] Cf. Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 4:84 (n. 71), referring to Chrysippus, *SVP* 2:264,18f.: ὁ πάντων τοῦ κόσμου λόγος.

[100] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:336 (n. 52).

[101] Cf. Inge, *ERE* 8:134–35 (n. 71) with reference to Cleanthes' hymn where the praise of the νόμος/λόγος is paralleled with the praise of Zeus.

Another distinction the Stoics introduced, according to ancient authors, is the distinction between the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος (i.e. reason) and the λόγος προφορικός (i.e. the spoken word).[102] Such a distinction is important for the view of the Logos as a term of "revelation": "in this way, Stoicism made it easier for Jewish philosophy to identify the Greek λόγος with the half-personified 'Word of Jahweh'"[103] – as, e.g. in Philo of Alexandria.

c) Later Platonism

In the Platonic tradition, the Logos became a central term only after it had been "adopted," under Stoic influence, in Middle Platonism. As such, Plutarch, Philo, and Celsus use the term. And the early Christian Logos theologians and the interpreters of John's prologue in the second century are apparently inspired from such a blending of concepts.

The Stoic Logos could be adopted into the Platonic system since a general tendency of Middle Platonist physics and cosmology was "the distinguishing of a first and second God …, between a completely transcendent, self-intelligizing figure, and an active demiurgic one."[104] Given the Platonic systems in the first century B.C.E., which envisioned three principles, God, matter, and "forms"/"ideas" (as contents of God's mind), the Logos was linked in various ways with the "forms" as an intermediate or mediating entity that represents the creative activity, immaterial but subordinate to the supreme and transcendent God.

Thus, in his Platonic interpretation of the myth of Isis and Osiris, Plutarch calls Osiris the first God, the transcendent one, the Nous and the Logos, the good and rational principle of the world[105] by which the visible world was generated. But on the other hand, the Logos, represented in Osiris' body, is said to have "two aspects, the transcendent and the immanent,"[106] the one represented in Osiris' soul and the other in his body. Thus, the Logos and Nous, as such, remain transcendent, and the relevant creative or demiurgic activity is distinguished from the ideal of the transcendent God.

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[102] The distinction as such (without the terms) already dates back to Plato and Aristotle, and the terms are only found in Philo; cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:337–38 (n. 52).

[103] Inge, *ERE* 8:134 (n. 71).

[104] J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Duckworth, 1977), 46. Cf. on Antiochus of Askalon and his adoption of the Stoic Logos doctrine, ibid., 80 and 84; on Poseidonius, ibid., 108–09; on Eudorus, ibid., 128; on Plutarch, ibid., 200–02.

[105] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:331 (n. 52).

[106] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 200 (n. 104); but cf. the criticism by Ch. Schoppe, *Plutarchs Interpretation der Ideenlehre Platons* (Münsteraner Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 2; Münster: LIT, 1994), 214–16.

Here we can already see some of the problems later Platonizing interpreters had with the Christian doctrine of the Logos and with the Johannine idea of the Logos as mediator of the creation. In the second century, the pagan critic Celsus notes that the Logos of the Christian doctrine is not a "pure" and "holy" (transcendent) being but a human who was, even more horribly, crucified.[107] Platonizing concepts viewed the Logos within the framework of the duality between the transcendent God and the material world, either subordinate to the supreme God (e.g. Philo), or as a part of the transcendent world of the ideas or forms which cannot fully enter the realm of the visible world. Such a worldview necessarily caused problems when the Logos was considered divine and, at the same time, creator of the world or even an incarnate human being.

The views of Plotinus and Neoplatonism can be left aside here as they represent a later development,[108] but this is the philosophical framework in which Amelius as the first pagan philosopher then read John's prologue.[109]

d) Hermetism

A mixture of Stoic, Platonic, and Christian conceptions of the Logos can be found in the Hermetic writings. In the first tractate of the corpus, the *Poimandres* (Corpus Hermeticum I 4), the narrator or visionary (who is not identified with Hermes in this tractate) has a vision of the Deity (light and darkness, fire and water) in which a "holy λόγος" descends and covers the watery nature and the four elements appear. The light giving λόγος that comes from the Light-Mind, that is God, is called "Son of God" (Corpus Hermeticum I 6).[110] In this opening cosmogonic vision and in a second one, the Logos functions as mediator of the creation. If the *Poimandres* is already a pagan reaction to Christian views, the text probably presupposes the ideas of Gen 1 and perhaps also the Johannine notion of the Logos as saviour and revealer.[111] So the notion of the Logos appears as a synthesis of Stoic and biblical ideas including the Logos as a personification and as mediator of the creation while its subordination to the νοῦς is an element of Platonic thought.[112] Thus, although being somewhat later than John, the

[107] Origen, *Cels*. 2.31; cf. H. E. Lona, *Die 'wahre Lehre' des Kelsos* (Kommentar zu den frühchristlichen Apologeten: Ergänzungsband 1; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2005), 144–45.

[108] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:333–34 (n. 52).

[109] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:335 (n. 52), and Vollenweider, "Der Logos als Brücke vom Evangelium zur Philosophie," passim (n. 80).

[110] Cf. extensively C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (3d ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), 99–144; see also Löhr, *RAC*, 338–40 (n. 52).

[111] Cf. Löhr, *RAC* 23:339 (n. 52), more thoroughly J. Büchli, *Der Poimandres: Ein paganisiertes Evangelium* (WUNT 2/27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987).

[112] Cf. Büchli, *Poimandres*, 46 (n. 111).

Hermetic texts provide an interesting illustration of the religious "climate" in which the gospel's views could be read and received.

e) Greek Hypostases of the Logos

A final context which goes beyond the field of philosophy strictly conceived should not be ignored: the Greek "theology" in which the Logos is identified with mythological figures (or the mythological figures are reinterpreted in the sense of a metaphysical principle).[113] Thus, the personification of the Logos in John or its character as a hypostasis of God has a wide range of parallels in Greek thought and poetry. The tendency to personalize the Logos is old, starting as early as in Plato, although in his texts, the personal notion is merely rhetorical, not mythological.[114] In other early texts, however, Hermes or Pan can be presented as the Logos.[115] And such a presentation, of Hermes especially, is widespread in Stoicism and beyond. Notably in Cornutus, Hermes is the Logos, the messenger of the Gods, sent from heaven to the rational (λογικός) humans as a savior and revealer.[116] As "hermeneutical" Logos, Hermes also represents the duality of thought and speech.[117] Other Deities equated with the Logos are Osiris, Thoth, Helios, and others.[118]

Thus, we should note at least that the personal notion of the Logos in John is paralleled not only in Jewish Wisdom speculation but also in various ideas about the Logos in Greek thought and, perhaps even more, popular religion.

IV. Biblical and Early Jewish Contexts

The biblical and early Jewish aspects linked with the term might have been closer to the first readers of John. It has been rightly observed that the gospel expects its (ideal) readers to have a rather detailed knowledge of biblical stories (e.g. Num 21 in John 3:14 or the Jacob stories in John 4). Thus we can presuppose that they noticed the allusion to LXX Gen 1:1 in John 1:1. This presupposition affects how readers understand the term ὁ λόγος.

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[113] Cf. Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1061 (n. 71); Löhr, *RAC* 23:341 (n. 52).

[114] Cf. Plato, *Phaidr*. 264c; see Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1061 (n. 71).

[115] Plato, *Crat*. 407e–408b.

[116] Cornutus, *Nat. d*. 16, see Hippolytus, *Haer*. 4.48.2; cf. Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1062–63 (n. 71); Löhr, *RAC*, 341 (n. 52).

[117] Cf. Justin, *1 Apol*. 22; see Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1063 (n. 71).

[118] See Leisegang, PW 13/1, 1061–65 (n. 71).

1. The Biblical Notion of Word of God in Creation and History

The reference to the beginning of the (Greek) Bible is quite obvious in the beginning of John, and readers are immediately led to look for further connections with the creation account in Gen 1. The term λόγος, however, does not appear in Gen 1. In that chapter, only God's verbal activity (λέγειν respectively the form εἶπεν) is mentioned. Nevertheless, John 1:1 may refer to the word(s) of command God spoke in the creation account similar to the manner later references to the creation in the biblical and early Jewish tradition use the term λόγος comprehensively for the creative and powerful word of God.[119]

In the Septuagint, λόγος and ῥῆμα are renderings of the Hebrew *dābār*[120] which is used in manifold ways for speech, saying, or word (of humans or God) but also, for example, thing, matter, event, and reason. In the prophetic tradition, *dābār* is prominently used for God's word as received and transmitted by the prophets (cf. Jer 1:4, 11; Ezek 1:3; Amos 3:1 or in superscriptions such as Hos 1:1, or Zeph 1:1). It is also used for the revelation in the word of the Law and the commandments (e.g. in the Decalogue [Exod 34:28]), and also for the divine word in the creation of the world. Thus, although the term is missing in Gen 1, Ps 33:6 can say that the heavens were made "by the word of YHWH" (LXX Ps 32:6: τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ κυρίου), and this verse is "often alluded to in early Jewish creation accounts."[121]

A similar phrase also occurs in the Genesis commentary from Qumran 4Q422 1 6. Judith 16:14 says, "you spoke, and they [= all creatures] were made," and the same phrase is used in *Jos. Asen.* 12:2 where God's "word" is mentioned in the following line. In *4 Ezra* 3:4, God's speaking is linked with the "beginning" when he formed the earth (cf. *4 Ezra* 6:38), and *4 Ezra* 6:43 contains the phrase "your word went forth," an allusion to Isa 48:3 and 55:11 (LXX: τὸ ῥῆμά μου).[122] Numerous other early Jewish texts mention God's word as agent of creation (*2 En.* 33:4; *Pr. Man.* 1:3; *2 Bar.* 14:17; 48:8; 54:1; *Sib. Or.* 1.19; 3.20 and *Apoc. Ab* 22:2).

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[119] For the analysis of the early Jewish creation accounts, see comprehensively M. Endo, *Creation and Christology: A Study on the Johannine Prologue in the Light of Early Jewish Creation Accounts* (WUNT 2/149; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002). P. Borgen, "Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John," in idem, *Logos Was the True Light and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* (Relieff 9; Trondheim: Tapir, 1983), 13–20, suggests that λόγος is "an interpretation and replacement of the phrase εἶπεν ὁ θεός" (14) in Gen 1:3 and adduces further evidence from rabbinic exegesis where Gen 1:3 served as the basis for the identification of the 'Word' with light (cf. ibid., 95–110).

[120] Cf. O. Procksch, "λέγω C: The Word of God in the Old Testament," *TDNT* 4:91–100; W. H. Schmidt et al., "דָּבָר dābhar, דָּבָר dābhār," *TDOT* 3:84–125; T. H. Tobin, "Logos," *ABD* 4:348–56 (349–51); R. Hoppe, "Logos," *NBL* 2:659–65 (659–60).

[121] Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 210 (n. 119), mentions Sir 33, 39; *Jub.* 12:4; *Sib. Or.* 1:3; 4Q381; 4Q422; *2 Bar.* 21, 48, 54; *Apoc. Ab.* 9:3; 22:2.

[122] Cf. Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 25–26 (n. 119).

Even more in combination with "the beginning" (ἀρχή), the mention of the λόγος is likely to be linked with the creation since the "beginning" is frequently used in contexts where reference to the work of the creation is made (Prov 8:22; Sir 24:9; 39:25; *Jub*. 2:2; *4 Ezra* 3:4; 6:6, 38; *2 Bar.* 21:4; *2 En*. 24:2 and also in New Testament texts).[123]

In the biblical tradition, God's "word" is not only linked with the work of the creation but also with God's works in human history and, in analogy with the creation, his works of eschatological restoration or salvation. Thus, Isa 55:11 states that the word from God's mouth shall not return "empty" but accomplish that for which it is sent. Here, the creation terminology illustrates "how God will bring about his redemptive works by his utterance."[124]

The question is, however, to what extent God's Word is considered an agent of its own or a kind of hypostasis. In the Hebrew Bible, "*dabhar* generally does not represent a personified force which exists … independently of God." There are, however, "certain beginnings of hypostatization"[125] which are, then, further developed in the Septuagint. Apart from Ps 33:6, other passages from the Psalms such as 107:20 "he sent forth his word, and healed them" (cf. Wis 16:12) and 147:15, 18–19 can be mentioned,[126] although they are meant to glorify God rather than define the character of the "word." In the framework of Deutero-Isaiah, the power of God's word is particularly emphasized (Isa 40:8; 55:10–11). But even if the texts speak of the word of God's own activity, "it is not (yet) a substantial being or a personally independent mediating figure,"[127] but is an impersonal but real power.

2. The Wisdom Tradition and Hypostatic Wisdom

In the Greek version, this is changed, at least in the books composed in Greek. The interesting fact that λόγος is more frequently used than ῥῆμα in the prophetic and wisdom books of the Septuagint, which were translated later than the Pentateuch, may also "reflect to some extent the growing influence on Hellenistic Judaism of Hellenistic culture and philosophy with their emphasis on *logos*."[128] On the other hand, "in the Septuagint, *logos* often took on a more dynamic meaning than it originally had in Greek"[129] which is certainly due to the meaning and usage in the Hebrew Bible.

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[123] Cf. ibid., 206.
[124] Ibid., 215.
[125] Schmidt, *TDOT* 3:121 (n. 120).
[126] Cf. ibid., 121, and Hoppe, *NBL* 2:660 (n. 120).
[127] Schmidt, *TDOT* 3:124 (n. 120).
[128] Tobin, *ABD* 4:350 (n. 120).
[129] Ibid.

Wisdom 9:1 claims (possibly based on LXX Ps 32:6) that God has made the universe by his λόγος, and Wis 16:12 (cf. LXX Ps 106:20) mentions his λόγος "that heals all people." In a reference to the Egyptian plagues, Wis 18:15 even depicts God's almighty λόγος as a heavenly warrior or angel of revenge, bearing the sharp sword, standing on earth with his head touching the heavens.[130] This mythological description is probably due to the reading of Hab 3:5 LXX where the Hebrew דֶּבֶר (= pestilence) is read in a variant punctuation as דָּבָר and thus rendered by λόγος.[131] But irrespective of that explanation, such a language points to a certain readiness "to attribute to the spoken word an existence and activity of its own"[132] more than in the books of the Hebrew Bible: the word "is sent, comes, goes, endures, and so forth."[133]

The Wisdom of Solomon is also a striking example for the conflation of God's Wisdom (σοφία) and God's λόγος: In the prayer of Wis 9:1–2, they are mentioned in a clear parallelism as mediators of the creation: "Lord of mercy, who has made the universe by your word (ἐν λόγῳ σου), and by your wisdom (τῇ σοφίᾳ σου) you have formed the human being …" In Wis 18:15, the λόγος adopts more attributes from the hypostatic Wisdom who is said to be almighty (παντοδύναμος, 7:23) as is his λόγος (18:15) and sits by his throne (9:4) from where his λόγος comes (18:15).

Such an analogy of Wisdom and Logos is prepared in earlier Wisdom traditions: Proverbs 8:22–31 presents Lady Wisdom as a pre-existent being (8:23, πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος; ἐν ἀρχῇ; see also 8:25),[134] close to God (8:30, ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ; cf. 8:27), and cooperating in his work of creation (8:30, ἁρμόζουσα ἐγὼ ἤμην; cf. Wis 7:22). Here, Wisdom is clearly more than a mere quality but a quasi-personal figure, a hypostasis that has "an independent existence in the presence of God"[135] and addresses the readers.

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[130] On the destructive power of the word, cf. Isa 11:4 and then *Pss. Sol.* 17:24, 37. Cf. B. L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia* (SUNT 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 98–99.

[131] Cf. J. Jeremias, "Zum Logos-Problem," *ZNW* 59 (1968): 92–95. Further influences might be from the Egyption Hermes-Thot tradition, see Mack, *Logos und Sophia*, 101–06 (n. 130).

[132] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 264 (n. 25).

[133] Ibid., 264, n. 2.

[134] For a precise definition of pre-existence and expressions of pre-existence in John, cf. now F. Kunath, *Die Präexistenz Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (Diss. theol., Berlin 2014; to be published 2016 in BZNW), who points to the linguistic feature of the expression of temporal relationship as a 'marker' of pre-existence phrases. This applies not only to the Fourth Gospel but also to early Jewish texts and brings about a more precise categorization of the respective texts.

[135] Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 153 (n. 26).

The form of the self-presentation of Wisdom is again adopted in Sir 24:3[136] where Wisdom claims to have come forth from the mouth of God (i.e. to be the Word of God which is then more precisely characterized as the Torah given to Israel): Wisdom is pre-existent (Sir 24:9, πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), of heavenly origin (24:4), sent into the world (24:8) and dwells in Zion, thus also in Israel (24:10, 12). Hypostatic Wisdom, the Word of the Torah, and the function as collaborator of the creation of the world are conflated here. It is merely a logical consequence when the Wisdom of Solomon, then, introduces the term λόγος in the same context so that the λόγος now fully shares the character previously ascribed to Lady Wisdom.

Like Wisdom, the λόγος is also linked with the creation (Wis 9:1–2; cf. 7:22). Also like her (Prov 8:27, 30; Sir 24:4), the λόγος is said to be close to God or even to abide on a heavenly throne (LXX Ps 118:89; Wis 18:15). And it would not be too astonishing if other aspects such as her connection with life (Wis 8:13; LXX Ps 118:25, 107) and light (Bar 4:2; LXX Ps 118:105) and its being sent into humankind, human hearts (Wis 9:10; cf. John 1:10–11), or even "tabernacling" among individuals in Zion (Sir 24:8; cf. John 1:14b) were, then, transferred to the λόγος.

3. The Various Functions of the Logos in Philo

Of course, neither the presentation of Wisdom as a (female) and quasi-divine hypostasis nor the increasing usage of the Logos terminology in Wisdom of Solomon were developed in isolation from the thought patterns of the world around. Much more than in Wisdom of Solomon, however, the influence of the philosophical ideas is obvious in Philo. In his works, λόγος "found its full flowering in Hellenistic Jewish literature."[137] While he "could use the Stoic concept of the *logos* as the principle of rationality that pervades the universe (*Her.* 88; *Fug.* 110), Philo's *logos* primarily fits into the pattern of the intermediate figure found in most Middle Platonic systems."[138] In the present context, we can highlight some more important aspects from Philo's multi-faceted usage of the term.[139]

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[136] Cf. the synopsis of Sir 24, other Wisdom traditions and the Johannine prologue in C. A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup 89; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1993), 83–94.

[137] T. H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John in Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 256–57.

[138] Tobin, *ABD* 4:350 (n. 120).

[139] Cf. the excellent survey in C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation*, 65–74 (n. 25); more thoroughly H.-F. Weiß, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinischen Judentums* (TU 97; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966); Mack, *Logos und Sophia*, 108–79 (n. 130); and the discussion in Tobin, "The Prologue of John" (n. 137); J. Leonhardt-Balzer, "Der Logos und die Schöpfung: Streiflichter bei Philo (Op 20–25) und im

As his predecssors in Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom speculation, Philo can identify λόγος and σοφία (cf. *Leg. All.* 1.65; *Her.* 191; *Somn.* 2.242–245). Both are considered the image of God (*Conf.* 146),[140] are linked with "the beginning" (*Conf.* 146; *Ebr.* 30–32; *Virt.* 61–63), and are considered the instrument of the creation (*Cher.* 127; *Det.* 54). But both are also deemed to be created (*Ebr.* 31; *Leg. All.* 3.175). The λόγος is called the "firstborn" (πρωτότοκος) or the "eldest" (πρεσβύτατος) of all beings so that God can be called his Father. Accordingly, the σοφία can then be called the mother of the λόγος (*Fug.* 108–109).[141] Thus, there are some differences: Wisdom is more closely linked with God, whereas the λόγος is considered a mediator of God's activities toward the world.

The functions of the Logos can be described in three dimensions: cosmological, anthropological, and "anagogical."[142]

With respect to *cosmology*, the Logos is the highest of all beings, the one closest to God (*Fug.* 101), and, "as in John 1:1, the λόγος could even be referred to with the anarthrous θεός (*Somn.* 1.228–230)."[143] Following Platonic thought (mainly from Plato's *Timaeus*) and the distinction between the world of ideas and the material world, the Logos was considered God's incorporeal plan, the blueprint of creation or "the archetypal idea in which all other ideas were contained" (*Opif.* 23–25)[144] that was in God's mind before the creation. The Logos is *image* in a twofold manner: the image of the transcendent God above and "the image or paradigm according to which the universe was ordered." In Middle-Platonic manner, Philo can distinguish different forms of causality: due to the distinction between God as the cause (αἰτία) of the creation and the λόγος as the instrument (ὄργανον), Philo can also call the λόγος the ὄργανον "through which (δι' οὗ) the universe was ordered" (*Cher.* 125–127).[145] With regard to the world, the Logos can be considered the creative power and also the ruling power "by which the universe continued to be ordered."[146] Here, Middle-Platonist thought patterns are adopted to characterize the role of the λόγος as an intermediate figure in the creation and ruling of the world and to maintain God's true transcendence which only allows an indirect relationship between God and the material world.

A second function of the Logos is *anthropological*: in his interpretation of Gen 1:27, Philo explains that humans were created not as the image of God but "according to the image of God" (*Opif.* 24–25). That image, the incorporeal "heavenly man," is the λόγος.

Johannesprolog (Joh 1,1–18)," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums*, 295–319 (n. 23); F. Siegert, "Der Logos," 277–94 (n. 58).

[140] Tobin, *ABD* 4:350 (n. 120).

[141] Cf. Leonhardt-Balzer, "Der Logos und die Schöpfung," 298 (n. 139).

[142] Cf. Tobin, *ABD* 4:350–52 (n. 120).

[143] Tobin, "The Prologue of John," 257 (n. 137).

[144] Ibid. Cf. also Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 171 (n. 119).

[145] Tobin, "The Prologue of John," 257 (n. 137), who points to the Middle Platonic "metaphysics of prepositions" (259) which is used here to distinguish various types of causality. Philo distinguishes between God as the cause of the creation and the Logos as the instrument – a distinction which will appear also in the second century interpreters of the Prologue.

[146] Tobin, *ABD* 4:350 (n. 120).

There is a certain correspondence between the λόγος and the human mind (as the highest part of the human being) which was also "in some fashion a fragment or an effulgence of the divine *logos* (*Opif.* 146; *Spec. Leg.* 4.123)."[147] Thus, Philo can also see a relationship between the microcosm (human being) and the macrocosm (the universe),[148] a concept which comes close to some Stoic ideas.

In a third, *anagogical* function, the Logos "was meant to guide the human soul to the realm of the divine," to "knowledge and vision of God" (*Deus* 143), or to the likeness of God (*Fug.* 63). That possibility "is rooted in the soul's … participation in the divine *logos*."[149]

The various dimensions of the utilization of the Logos and Philo's rather unsystematic language provide difficulties for interpretation. Due to the (Middle) Platonic view of God as a perfect, transcendent being, Philo has to consider how the transcendent God could act in creation and history. For this purpose, the notion of λόγος is adopted from Jewish-Hellenistic Wisdom tradition and considered in its function as an intermediate reality between God and the material world, with the effect that exegetical problems felt in the biblical texts can be solved.[150] In any case, it is insufficient to merely adduce the linguistic parallels with the Johannine prologue without considering the place of those expressions in Philo's thought.[151]

Whereas there are good reasons to think that the Fourth Evangelist knew Wisdom,[152] it is doubtful whether he had direct access to Philo's thought or works.[153] But we can see from Philo how far a (very educated) Hellenistic Jew could develop the idea of the Logos. On the other hand, Philo's concerns differ from those in Ben Sira and Wisdom of Solomon and also from those of the Fourth Gospel. And in spite of some terminological affinities, it is clear that "in Philo, the Logos is never fully personal, certainly never incarnate, and never the object of faith and love."[154]

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[147] Ibid., 351.

[148] Cf. ibid.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Cf., for examples, Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 174–75 (n. 119).

[151] An example of a contextual comparison is Leonhardt-Balzer, "Der Logos und die Schöpfung," 295–319 (n. 139), with a precise comparison of contexts related to Gen 1.

[152] Cf. my argument in J. Frey, "'Wie Mose die Schlange in der Wüste erhöht hat …': Zur frühjüdischen Deutung der 'ehernen Schlange' und ihrer christologischen Rezeption in Johannes 3,14f," in *Schriftauslegung im antiken Judentum und im Urchristentum* (ed. M. Hengel and H. Löhr; WUNT 73; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 153–205 (197–98, 202).

[153] Cf. basically H.-F. Weiß, *Untersuchungen*, 309 (n. 139); quoted by Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 654, n. 29 (n. 24), and, more recently, D. T. Runia, "Philo and the New Testament," in idem, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (CRINT III/3; Assen: van Gorcum, 1993), 83.

[154] Thus McHugh, *John 1–4*, 94 (n. 27).

Scholarly views vary between the view that Philo leads straight into the core of Johannine Christology[155] and the sober verdict that there is "nothing specific for which Philo is essential to understand it."[156] While the latter may be true for the thought of the Evangelist, we can see in Philo some of the philosophical problems John's early readers, or a part of them, might have felt when reading his biblical creation accounts. It is also possible that the same difficulties came up in their reading of the prologue as well.

4. Targumic and Rabbinic Ideas about the Word of God

Apart from Philo, scholars looking for the background of the "personal" or at least hypostatic character of the Logos point to the rabbinic tradition or, rather, to the technical use of the term ממרא (*Memra*) in the Targumim.[157] Such a scholarly perspective often presupposes that the biblical notion of God's word (even in the Septuagint) is insufficient to explain John's usage, and especially for scholars looking for a Palestinian-Jewish context of John, the targumic usage of ממרא offers an explanation preferable to a Philonic background.[158] Targum research was particularly stimulated after the publication of the Neofiti manuscript from the Vatican Library because, for the Palestinian Targum Neofiti, scholars had suggested an earlier date than for the other Palestinian Targums and a development in the usage of ממרא could be demonstrated.[159] According to modern scholarship, "*Memra* of the Lord" is not in all cases a mere substitution of the tetra-

[155] Thus F. Siegert, "Der Logos," 277 (n. 58); see also Hoppe, *NBL* 2:664 (n. 120).

[156] L. H, Hurtado, "Does Philo Help Explain Early Christianity?," in *Philo and the New Testament* (ed. R. Deines and K.-W. Niebuhr; WUNT 172; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 73–92 (78). Cf. also the sober, but more substantial summary by Leonhardt-Balzer, "Der Logos und die Schöpfung," 318–19 (n. 139).

[157] Cf. basically M. McNamara, "Logos of the Fourth Gospel and Memra of the Palestinian Targum (Exod 12:42)," in idem, *Targum and New Testament: Collected Essays* (WUNT 279; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 439–43; idem, *Targum and Testament Revisited* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010), 154–66 (with a history of modern interpretation).

[158] Thus most recently J. Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), who finds the targumic context most plausible for John. See also D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), who sees a close parallel between Christianity's developing Logos Christology and Judaism's (targumic) *Memra* theology.

[159] Cf. R. Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence: The Memra* (Totowa: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1981): In Neofiti, the term indicates God's revelatory activity based on the divine name from Exod 3:14, whereas later Targum texts use it more and more as a mere substitution for the divine name. Cf. idem, "The Memra of YHWH and the Development of Its Use in Targum Neofiti," *JJS* 25 (1974): 16–32.

grammaton,[160] an empty word to avoid anthropomorphisms, but implies a more thorough theology of the name of God, especially in the early Targum Neofiti.[161]

Thus, for example, in Gen 1:3, 5, 6 the creation is attributed to the ממרא דיי (“the Word of the Lord”),[162] and especially the link between the Word and the Light is then confirmed in the Targum on Exod 12:42 where it is said, “And the Word [*Memra*] of the Lord was the light and it shone … and he called it the first night.”[163] Here, McNamara finds an even closer connection between John 1:1–5 and the Palestinian Targums associating the Word and light, although such an association can also be established on the basis of other references to the creation in Second Temple Jewish texts.[164]

So we should not dismiss the Targums as a “blind alley in the study of the biblical background of John’s logos doctrine.”[165] On the other hand, we cannot dismiss the very close parallels from the Wisdom tradition, and we have to see only the Targums, not other rabbinic texts, use the term *Memra*, although the rabbis did also develop the idea of the “Word” as a hypostasis, especially based on the exegesis of Ps 33:6.[166]

5. The Word in the Early Christian Tradition

Considering that the Fourth Gospel already draws on a developed Christian tradition, it is also mandatory to include the earlier Christian usage of λόγος and the earlier traditions of wisdom theology into a survey of the possible backgrounds of the Johannine prologue. Although the absolute usage of λόγος is strikingly unique to the prologue, we should not ignore that the term ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ occurs in Rev 19:13 (possibly based on Wis 18:15) as a name of the returning Christ. Furthermore, the beginning of 1 John mentions the term λόγος τῆς ζωῆς which also implies a personal notion, and scholars are divided whether this is already a reception of John 1:1 or rather

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[160] Thus H.-L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Vol. 2 (Munich: Beck, 1922), 333 (see the excursus 302–33).

[161] Thus Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence*, xii (n. 159); adopted in McHugh, *John 1–4*, 8 (n. 27).

[162] Only in 1:1 is the term missing, but possibly dropped out, cf. *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense Ms de la Biblioteca Vaticana*, Tomo I: *Génesis* (ed. A. Díez Macho; Textos y Estudios 7; Madrid/Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), 2–3.

[163] Cf. McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited*, 164 (n. 157).

[164] Cf. Endo, *Creation and Christology*, 217–19 (n. 119).

[165] Thus Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 97 (n. 26); also quoted by Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:349–50 (n. 30).

[166] Cf *Mekhilta R. Yishmael*, Beschallach 10 (ed. Ch. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, *Mechilta d’Rabbi Ismael cum variis lectionibus et adnotationibus* [2d ed.; Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960], 150). For the rabbis, see the article by H. Bietenhard, “Logos-Theologie im Rabbinat: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom Wort Gottes im rabbinischen Schrifttum,” *ANRW* 2.19.2 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1979), 580–618.

an expression from the Johannine tradition that might help to explain the prominence of the Logos terminology in the Johannine circle.[167] We cannot enter the debate on the precise date of the Johannine epistles and their location in the prehistory or in the reception history of the gospel here, but the epistles are, in any case, close to the gospel, thus illuminating the language of the gospel and providing glimpses into Johannine language and tradition.[168]

Although the gospel narrative never uses the absolute term, the idea of Jesus proclaiming and representing the Word of God is present in the whole gospel (cf. also 1 John 1:10; 2:14). Jesus acts as the "embodied" word, he pronounces God's words (John 3:34), and he gives lengthy discourses only interrupted by few dialogic interventions. Thus, he is presented much more as a teaching and preaching figure than in the earlier gospel tradition or in the Synoptics (apart from Matthew).

It should also be noted that, in the earlier gospel tradition, Jesus' message, or the gospel, is not only called the "word of God" (e.g. Mark 2:2; Luke 5:1; for Paul, cf. 1 Thess 2:13; furthermore Acts 6:2; Rev 1:9), it is also called ὁ λόγος in both the Synoptics (cf. Mark 4:13–20;cf. Luke 8:11) and in Paul (e.g. 1 Thess 1:6; Phil 1:14).[169] This shows that even the rather particular usage in the Johannine prologue was not unprepared in the early Christian tradition and that the idea of a "direct" borrowing from Hellenistic Jewish or pagan contexts seem to be inappropriate.

This is further strengthened by the fact that Wisdom terminology and speculation entered Christian tradition long before the development of the Johannine tradition, most probably in certain elements of Jesus' own teaching (cf. Matt 11:19 par. Luke 7:35; cf. also Luke 11:49)[170] and also in the Pauline tradition (cf. 1 Cor 1:30 and esp. Col 1:15–20). Thus, the idea of Wisdom as an important figure and its connection with the Word were not unprecedented in pre-Johannine Christianity.

In any case, we should consider that the Christian background is "of no less importance than the Greek and Jewish background"[171] for explaining the linguistic choice in John 1:1. The language of the prologue is developed within the Christian – and probably the Johannine – tradition, not

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[167] Cf. the suggestion by Jeremias, "Logos-Problem," 85 (n. 131), who considers an early reception of the title in the form of Rev 19:13: "Der Logostitel dürfte zuerst im Raum des hellenistischen Judenchristentums, und zwar als Prädikat des wiederkehrenden Herrn auf Jesus Christus angewendet worden sein."

[168] Cf. J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, Vol. 3: *Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten* (WUNT 117; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 55–60.

[169] Cf. especially Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 154 (n. 26).

[170] Cf. M. Hengel, "Jesus als messianischer Lehrer der Weisheit und die Anfänge der Christologie," in M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie* (WUNT 138; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 81–131.

[171] Thus correctly Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 154 (n. 26).

merely borrowed from other contexts. And history-of-religions research has too often merely looked at the "external" parallels and influences where we would do better to assume an interaction or a development from the interaction with various contexts.

V. Clarifications in the Reading Process

It is not the intention of the present article to arrive at a comprehensive and "balanced" interpretation of the Johannine prologue and its enigmatic beginning or to "decide" the difficult history-of-religions issues here. I will more modestly point to some textual aspects that could have triggered early readers' readings or may even today lead interpreters to a decision as to which aspects of the multi-faceted term λόγος should be considered first and which notions are rather difficult to maintain in further reading of the text. Accordingly, we can keep the reader-response perspective and understand how the term is clarified or how its meaning or dimensions could be perceived in the reading process by ancient readers. Methodologically we keep the issue of the "first" or "intended" readers open and imagine the textual play with various readers of different backgrounds or education instead of simply presupposing a particular profile of the first readers in the Johannine community since we cannot preclude that even in the Johannine community there were readers aware of the philosophical and pagan religious dimensions of the λόγος.[172] How, then, is the term used and unfolded in the flow of the text and in the course of reading?

1. How Could the Logos Be Known?

When, after the first three words of the text, the term ὁ λόγος is first mentioned, it is introduced with the definite article and without any further explanation. Apparently the text presupposes that the λόγος is not unknown to the readers (i.e. they already have some idea of the λόγος). Therefore, they are implicitly called to consider what they already know about "the" λόγος or to ask for a λόγος in their cultural "encyclopedia."

[172] Numerous commentaries, as demonstrated above, seem to depart from such a presupposition which is certainly undue for a community in an urban environment as it is undue for Hellenistic diaspora Judaism. Texts from the Jewish diaspora (see n. 36 above) demonstrate a certain awareness of the issues of Hellenistic philosophy, and for Jesus followers from the diaspora, this should also be assumed. Already Paul is aware of certain intellectual presuppositions of his readers, e.g. in Corinth, and for Christian writings of the late first and of the second century, from Hebrews and Luke/Acts to the Pastorals, 2 Peter or *2 Clement*, this is also evident.

Here, the theoretical concept of reader interaction can be fruitfully applied. Readers create their meaning of the text in the course of reading, and their encyclopedia (i.e. their knowledge of the meaning of words and of the world around them) is drawn into the process of meaning production. The text thus creates "resonances" in the readers' minds, and their understanding is made up from the interaction between their ideas or the "resonances" evoked and the ongoing text. With different readers, different kinds of interaction and, to some extent, different nuances of understanding are produced. Thus even at the end of the text, when the reading process is finished, there is not simply "one" meaning communicated to the readers that could be exegetically defined but at least a variety of nuances or different types of understanding. These insights, widely used in the interpretation of narrative texts (and thus also of the Fourth Gospel as a whole), can also be applied to the reading of the Johannine prologue and the understanding of the λόγος. It is interesting, however, that Johannine scholarship has only rarely drawn on those perspectives with regard to the perception and understanding of the Johannine prologue and its terms.

Therefore, we can ask questions about the Johannine readers. Would they know "the Logos" from the community discourse in which the term was already routinely associated with or applied to Jesus? Would they consequently associate the Logos with the divine word, the Christian message, or, even from the very beginning, with Jesus Christ? If so, they might even perceive that John 1:1 and thus the beginning of the gospel does not yet speak of "Jesus" but of "the Logos." So the protagonist of the work, Jesus Christ (cf. 1:17), is from the beginning associated with particular dimensions expressed by the term ὁ λόγος, including references to the biblical "word" as well as to a revelatory or even cosmological dimension. Or would readers imagine more precisely a Logos as a hypostatic mediator as developed within Hellenistic Judaism in its encounter with Greco-Roman thought and mentioned particularly in Philo? Of course, such a perspective cannot be assumed for all diaspora Jews, but it must be considered a possibility for certain readers from the Jewish diaspora, from within the synagogal organization or from its margins, or from the circles of Jesus followers in a diaspora context. Or would they even feel reminded of a Stoic concept of the Logos, which is eternal and thus also in the beginning (if there is any clear "beginning") and which was considered to be the principle behind the periodic processes of the world? Or would they simply think that this is just another "name" or "title" of a deity, or, in this case, Jesus? The reading depends on the cultural knowledge and background of the respective readers.

Considering the background of the earliest readers of the Fourth Gospel is, of course, hypothetical since we do not have a safe knowledge about John's first readers and their backgrounds. It is reasonable to assume that the work primarily aims at readers from the Johannine communities, but it is far from certain that it was intentionally or actually confined to such a readership. We must assume that the evangelist was already aware that gospels are transferred from one community to another[173] and are thus read by other

[173] Especially if the evangelist himself could use other gospel writings and traditions which were not composed in 'his' community circle.

readers in other communities. From this, he might have considered that his text would probably be spread beyond the "Johannine" communities and be read in a wider circle of communities or even by interested people at the margins. We can conclude from the Johannine text that the work presupposes a considerable scriptural knowledge and also some knowledge of Christian teaching, Christian tradition, and even Christian texts in order to be understood in its subtleties. But even if the text fully "works" only with such informed readers, we cannot be sure that all the readers in the Johannine communities had such a knowledge nor can we preclude that the work was also read by readers without that particular knowledge. Are those readers "unintended"? Or secondarily intended? Or is this even an appropriate question as a text once circulated finds its readers and may quickly go beyond the circle of addressees the author had in mind?

These considerations simply demonstrate the openness of the reading processes. A text such as the Johannine prologue may cause in its readers a wide variety of mental "movements" or "oscillations" during their reading. And if exegesis is not only determining "the" meaning intended by "the" author but illuminating the earliest communication processes, we must reckon with a wider plurality of readers and leave behind the idea of the text merely read in the Johannine community as it has often been imagined as rather closed or even "sectarian" (i.e. free from influences or from concepts of the surrounding world). The Fourth Gospel in particular, with its wide metaphors and its numerous implicit commentary-like elements which help readers understand, has the potential to address a wider readership.

The following sections are an experiment in imagining various reading processes. I will try to describe how the notion of the Logos is developed within the prologue and at which points various readers may be inclined to connect a particular aspect with their own ideas of "the Logos," to find it particularly difficult to adopt an aspect, or to follow the ideas of the prologue. This is, of course, a hypothetical endeavour, but it is the only way to get hold of the possible "resonances" of the prologue's idea of the Logos.

2. The Intertextual Link to Genesis and the Creation Discourse

It is quite significant, however, that the words ἐν ἀρχῇ begin a text within the Jewish-Christian tradition, words which echo the beginning of the Greek Pentateuch (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, Gen 1:1 LXX). So, if we can reasonably presuppose that (the majority of) the first readers of John were situated within that context, we can assume that they noticed the reference to the beginning of the Torah or even felt this gospel's claim to be read alongside the Scriptures.

Other readers, unaware of the Jewish Scriptures, might have missed that point, but even they could potentially understand the text within a discourse about the "beginning" of the world, or the cosmogony. And readers with a certain degree of philosophical education – as we should expect within Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian circles – could probably perceive the resonances of this opening in the context of contemporary Stoic or Middle-Platonic thought. Not only the Logos but also the ideas of a certain "beginning" of the present world were imagined in those widespread (and popularized) schools of thought and could be part of everyday discussions of educated urban people. It is in-

appropriate to presuppose that Diaspora Jews or Jesus followers in an urban environment somewhere in the Roman Empire were totally ignorant of such contexts.

3. Contextualizing ὁ λόγος in Reading the Prologue

The precise relationship between the terms in John 1:1–2, however, is not easy to determine: What does it mean that "the" Logos was in "the beginning"? In Gen 1:1, there is "the beginning" but no mention of the term λόγος. And the beginning of the prologue does not define a simple correspondence or analogy, neither between the Logos and God (1:1c), between the Logos and the Torah,[174] nor even between the Logos and God's initial word spoken when he created the light and the other works of the creation. All these relations are addressed to various degrees but also nuanced in the unfolding of the prologue. So in following the "story" of the Logos in the prologue or, rather,[175] the sequence of explicative remarks about its function in past and present, we can see the clarifications or modifications in the course of the text.

a) In its third word, John differs from the Septuagint of Genesis. Here, it is not ἐποίησεν, the aorist form of a verb of "to create" summarizing God's creational act, but ἦν, an imperfect verb of unclear reference to some kind of "past" "in the beginning," to an initial state from which things should develop. No reader would initially think of any state of "pre-existence" here. Such a conclusion can only be made on the basis of the wider context and especially of the sayings later in the gospel in which a temporal "priority" is explicitly stated.[176] But in its difference from the ἐποίησεν from Gen 1:1 LXX, the word ἦν can stimulate the question how the ἀρχή mentioned here relates to God's creation in Gen 1:1. Does the author point to the same beginning or does he mean a beginning temporally or metaphorically "behind" the beginning of the world? In biblical exegesis, these issues are often discussed within the context of wider hermeneutical considerations, but in the Johannine text, the precise relationship is left unexplained. From the imagination evoked from these verses, however, the Logos cannot be

[174] Such a simple identification is substantiated in neither John 1:1 nor 1:17. The identification, as suggested by Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:360–63 (n. 30), is merely concluded from external assumptions about the Johannine community, its apologetic situation, and other factors.

[175] As the text does not provide a clear chronological sequence, there is no real "story" of the Logos. Such a sequence, "story," or myth could only be determined for some selected verses, thus the idea to find such a myth of Wisdom or a redeemer figure was in the background of the attempts to reconstruct a *Vorlage* behind the text of the prologue. On those readings, cf. J. Frey, "Heil und Geschichte im Johannesevangelium," in idem, *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten*, 585–637 (617–25) (n. 6).

[176] On those expressions of "pre-existence" ("*Präexistenzsätze*") see now F. Kunath, *Die Präexistenz Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (n. 134).

simply the creative word, spoken at the act of creation. The text already suggests that the Logos introduced here is something or even "someone" behind the creation. The personification goes beyond the biblical account.

Of course, such a λόγος as a rational or creative principle underlying the world could also be imagined in Stoicism. It might have formed matter and would also be called divine. And it is easy to understand that people may or may not adopt or grasp that λόγος (cf. John 1:9–10). The difficulties for a Stoic view begin as soon as creation is understood as a divine act conceptualized in the biblical account. Furthermore, the idea of the Logos as a divine word of authority, and later, of course, the idea of its "incarnation" would be rather alien or even unacceptable for such a view.

b) When the Logos is mentioned for the first time, its relation to God – who is obviously and without further specification the God of the biblical tradition[177] – is addressed: With the paradoxical expression that the Logos was πρὸς τὸν θεόν (i.e. "in the presence of," "in relation to," or rather "toward" God) and that it was also θεός (i.e. divine, or even God) the prologue expresses an extremely close relationship of the Logos with the one biblical God, although a plain identification with God the creator is excluded.

Viewing the λόγος in such a close connection with the biblical God, the creator would still be an uncommon idea for Jewish readers, although there are some passages about Wisdom expressing a similar closeness to God or even a kind of Divinity. Especially Prov 8:30 (ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ) or Wis 9:4 (Wisdom as πάρεδρος on God's throne) express such a closeness, and Prov 8 also particularly refers to the beginning (Prov 8:23, πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος; ἐν ἀρχῇ) or the presence at the creation (Prov 8:23; cf. Sir 24:4). Thus, a particular affinity to the biblical Wisdom tradition is suggested by some close parallels in the biblical and early Jewish tradition.

This does not mean, however, that the terms were inconceivable for other readers. Stoics could easily adopt the divinity of the λόγος – albeit with a different concept of "creation" or cosmogony. Furthermore, we should not ignore that the view of "the Logos" as a personification of a Deity (e.g. Zeus and Hermes) was not unknown in the pagan world. Of course, the Jewish concept of God does not allow such an identification, but in the first words of the prologue, the concepts are not precisely defined so that the idea of two distinct deities, a Divine Logos and a "God," would not be plainly excluded at that point of reading. In the course of the text, however, such an idea as might have been introduced by an uninformed pagan reader would quickly turn out to be inappropriate.

It is no coincidence that the distinction of two or – with the Spirit-Paraclete – even three divine beings together with their close correlation (e.g. John 10:30; 16:13–15) later functioned as a prominent argument in the christological discussions and became a cornerstone in the development of christological and Trinitarian creed.

c) With πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο of v. 3, the creational context already suggested by ἐν ἀρχῇ is confirmed, and with the mention of "light" and "life"

[177] On the Johannine image of God, cf. J. Frey, "Was trägt die johanneische Theologie zum christlichen Bild von Gott bei?," in *Narrativität und Theologie im Johannesevangelium* (ed. J. Frey and U. Poplutz; Biblisch-theologische Studien 130; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2012), 217–57.

in v. 4, the idea of "the Logos" is more firmly embedded in the context of biblical and early Jewish creation discourses, starting from Gen 1 but including a large number of other early Jewish (and early Christian) texts.[178] However, none of those texts explicitly mentions a "Logos" creating the universe. That idea, as such, goes far beyond the biblical creation account according to which God himself has created the world by pronouncing his word or command. The complex task for the reader of the prologue is now to combine the idea of God, the creator of the world, and the Logos by means of which (or, rather, by whom) everything has been created.

For readers well-versed in the biblical and early Jewish discourse, the idea of the divine Wisdom comes up here as Wisdom is also said to be quite closely associated with God, connected with the ἀρχή (Prov 8:22), or even pre-existent, "established before the ages, in the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ)" (Prov 8:23). Thus, the biblical pattern of the hypostatic Wisdom is called forth at least in readers with sufficient scriptural knowledge, although this cannot be presupposed for all readers of the text. But even if the intertextual link to Prov 8 or the Wisdom of Solomon is noticed, it may still be puzzling that in Jewish texts, Wisdom is never called ὁ λόγος. On the other hand, as Wisdom (to some degree personified) and God's word are already closely associated, primarily in Jewish Wisdom tradition but to some degree also in texts of the Synoptic tradition,[179] the fusion of the two concepts is not totally unprecedented.[180]

On the other hand, readers with a Stoic concept of the λόγος may still try to maintain this understanding because, for them, the eternal Logos can also be said to have formed the world and to communicate insight and life, and, of course, that it was – and is – "in the world" (John 1:9). So, the formation of the world "through" the Logos was still conceivable for such readers.

Difficulties, however, might arise for readers with a different understanding of the Divine as distinguished from the material or sensual world. Readers such as the Valentinian Heracleon, the earliest interpreter of John in the second half of the second century, could try to reinterpret the δι' αὐτοῦ in John 1:3. According to Heracleon, δι' αὐτοῦ does not necessarily imply that the Divine Logos himself created but can also be read in the sense that another one created through the power of the Logos: αὐτοῦ ἐνεργοῦντος ἕτερος ἐποίει.[181] Such an interpretation is obviously inspired by the intention to preserve the transcendence of the Divine Logos and to prevent him from being too strongly drawn into the material and sensual world. Here, we can observe the difficulties of a philosophically

[178] Cf. generally Endo, *Creation and Christology* (n. 119).

[179] In the early strata of the Jesus tradition, wisdom is explicitly mentioned in Luke 11:31–32Q (cf. Matt 12:41–42), Luke 10:21Q (cf. Matt 11:25), Luke 7:38Q (cf. Matt 11:19b), and Luke 11:25Q. In Matthew, the divine wisdom is very closely linked with Jesus in Matt 11:28–30. Cf. especially Hengel, "Jesus als messianischer Lehrer der Weisheit," 84–99 (n. 170).

[180] This implies that the use of ὁ λόγος is not merely due to the fact that the "female" Wisdom tradition had to be adapted to the "male" figure of Jesus.

[181] Text in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 14:103. Cf. Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus*, 139–51 (n. 66); see also J.-D. Kaestli, "L'Exégèse valentinienne du quatrième évangile," in *La communauté Johannique et son histoire: La trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles* (ed. J.-D. Kaestli, J.-M. Poffet, and J. Zumstein; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), 323–50 (346–48).

educated reader with the Johannine wording but also the widespread tendency of readers to harmonize the gospel text with their own concepts.

d) After vv. 3–4, the Logos is again the subject in vv. 9–11 while vv. 6–8 form a digression focusing on John the Baptizer. The change of the subject from ἐκεῖνος (referring to the Baptizer) to the Logos in v. 9 is not clearly indicated but can be noticed by the attentive reader because v. 8 constructs an opposition between the Baptizer who was not the light, and "the light" for which the Baptizer should give testimony. Then, v. 9 focuses on the "true light." Furthermore, the verb in v. 9 returns to the ἦν from vv. 1–2.

These digressions in vv. 6–8 and 15 were also the main reason for interpreters to reconstruct a hypothetical *Vorlage* or "hymn" considered to be reworked by prose insertions about the Baptizer (and possibly other additions). Although the stylistic differences can be observed, there is no completely satisfying explanation as to why the evangelist would destroy a dense and coherent "hymn" so oddly by his insertions.[182]

A supporting argument for the redaction-critical approach to the prologue has always been the idea that without those insertions the "story line" of vv. 1–18 (or at least 1–14) makes up a coherent tale, the "myth" of Wisdom or a redeemer "descending" from a heavenly abode into the world or even into a particular human being. But such a coherent (or even "salvation-historical") sequence can only be discovered when the Baptist passages are removed and, even then, the alleged "myth" is not fully coherent, nor fitting to any textual parallel. Therefore, the support for the redaction-critical approach is, at best, circular.

If the text is read as it is, there is no coherent "story" from eternity to incarnation or from the "*logos asarkos*" to the "*logos ensarkos*."[183] Instead, the text provides a sequence

[182] The history-of-religions explanation once forwarded by Rudolf Bultmann that this hymn originally was dedicated to John the Baptizer (or to an unknown gnostic revealer) and had to be turned away from its original reference to the "true light" Jesus (cf. vv. 8–9), is an ingenious idea but lacks historical plausibility. It is particularly unexplained how the evangelist, who is in Bultmann's view an ingenious theologian, could use such an odd literary technique of merely sewing together sources with a theology he did not agree with, whereas there are only very few text pieces or additions composed by himself. This is only conceivable on the background of Bultmann's Romanesque view of the evangelist as a former disciple of the Baptizer (with the Baptizer's movement already viewed as a gnostic group), and his "conversion" from the Baptizer to Jesus. But this "story of the evangelist" is even more implausible than Bultmann's redaction critical analyses. For thorough discussion of Bultmann's views, cf. J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie I*, 115–46 (n. 18).

[183] Already v. 5 does not fit a chronological sequence but phrases a view of the present: The light shines (at present) in the darkness. Cf. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 214 (n. 5); idem, *Evangelium*, 115–16 (n. 20). J. Frey, "Zu Hintergrund und Funktion des johanneischen Dualismus," in *Paulus und Johannes: Exegetische Studien zur paulinischen und johanneischen Theologie und Literatur* (ed. D. Sänger and U. Mell; WUNT 198; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 3–73 (31–32), also in idem, *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten*, 438–39 (n. 6); see also idem, "Heil und Geschichte im Johannesevangelium," in *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten*, 585–637 (620–21). For further reflections on the salvation-historical reading of the prologue see ibid., 617–25.

of "clarifications" that can show how the Logos mentioned in the beginning should be understood. So the readers are led to a deeper and more precise view of how the Logos from vv. 1–2 can be understood. In the course of reading, some concepts are confirmed, whereas others become more and more inappropriate or difficult to maintain.

In vv. 9–11, the Logos is again the grammatical subject of the phrases, although the term is not mentioned explicitly between v. 1 and v. 14. Now the focus is on its relationship with human beings, the world, and "his own." Having addressed the creational or cosmogonic role of the Logos, the prologue now focuses on its relationship with the human beings (v. 9) and the created world (vv. 10–11).

In v. 9, the Logos is said to be the true light that illuminates every human being.[184] In contrast with vv. 3–4, (life) and light are now not only said to be "in" the Logos, but the Logos "is" the true Light. This idea can easily be linked with a great number of biblical and early Jewish texts about the Torah or God's word as the (true) light (e.g. Ps 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23; Bar 4:2; 4Q511 1 7–8 etc.) and also about Wisdom as a light (Wis 6.12; 7:26, 29–30; *4 Esra* 14:20–21). In combination with its creational function, its illuminative effect is also strongly in accord with the sapiential adoption of the creation discourse, and further parallels in rabbinic texts seem to confirm this as does also the corpus of the gospel: Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:4) to illuminate humans through his revelation.

But at this point of the reading, the Logos is not yet explicitly linked with Jesus, and apart from the biblical and Early Jewish idea of the Torah as light or illuminating Wisdom, the idea of a Logos that illuminates humans or brings insight and understanding is also widespread within Stoic and Platonic thought.[185] Hermetic texts know the Logos as a medium of revelation and insight, and much earlier, especially Stoic concepts know well the Logos as a cosmic principle in which every human being has a share and which enables humans to understand and to live a reasonable life.

Verses 10–11 again strengthen the connection with the creation established in vv. 1–5 when it is confirmed that the world is made "through" the Logos. But now this is used as a contrast to the fact that the world did not recognize the Logos. Here the prologue again adopts aspects of the Early Jewish Wisdom discourse: Wisdom was given into the world[186] or even

[184] The problem of the syntactical connection of v. 9c cannot be discussed here.

[185] Cf., for example, G. van Kooten, "The 'True Light Which Enlightens Everyone' (John 1:9): John, Genesis, the Platonic Notion of the 'True, Noetic Light,' and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Representations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (ed. G. H. van Kooten; Themes in Biblical Narrative 8; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 149–94.

[186] Cf. esp. Sir 24:6; Wis 8:1.

came to dwell within Israel,[187] but it also experienced rejection or non-recognition.[188] Thus, vv. 10–11 could easily be read as a modification of the Wisdom tradition, which is now expressed by reference to the λόγος: as Wisdom was said to rule over the whole world (Sir 24:6), it is now stated for the λόγος, and as rejection was experienced by Sophia, the λόγος is now rejected by "his own," which is, in the present context, most probably "a reference to Israel's role."[189] In the body of the gospel, this is matched by the rejection of Jesus by his contemporaries in John 2–12 while his non-recognition by the world is particularly mirrored in the farewell discourses where the world is the predominant opponent, not the "Jews."

Of course, Hellenistic philosophical concepts are also aware of the idea of a rejection of the λόγος by unreasonable humans. Reason and insight are not adopted and used by everybody. Thus, the non-recognition of the λόγος is fairly conceivable for philosophical readers. More difficult might have been the idea that the λόγος came or comes into the world (if the syntax in v. 9 is read in that manner), which implies the Jewish idea of creation and the distinction between an unworldly God or Logos. But in vv. 9–11 this idea, which could be disturbing for readers unaware of the biblical and early Jewish tradition, is not so prominent as to completely disturb such readers.

e) Verse 12, then, introduces a rather different language. After the idea that some actually "adopted" the Logos (in contrast to those who rejected him), the verse switches into a language shaped by the early Christian tradition with the idea of becoming God's children and of "believing in his name." The use of family metaphors is still well conceivable within the biblical and Early Jewish traditions. Not only can Israel be called metaphorically a "son" of God but also the Israelites are called "children" of Zion/Jerusalem, which is – in a spiritual sense – their mother. Thus, the early Christian family language is firmly rooted in the biblical tradition, although the idea that the Logos gives the prerogative to be called God's children is also innovative in that framework. Even more beyond the Early Jewish and Sapiental traditions is the idea expressed in the final part of v. 12: Here the status as God's children or even being born from God (v. 13) is linked with a decisively Christian term: believing in "his name" (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ).[190] Here it is quite obvious that the prologue adopts Johannine (or wider Christian) community language, and the question is unavoidably posed, which "name" is meant here. Syntactically it is still the "name" of the Logos. But does the Logos have a name? Any non-Christian reader unaware of that must be puzzled here by the "riddle" of the name of the Logos which is

[187] Cf. Sir 24:7–11.

[188] Cf. Prov 1:20–27; Sir 24:28–29 and, in an apocalyptic framework, *1 En.* 42:1–2.

[189] Cf. M. Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup 71; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 104.

[190] Most interpreters who assume a pre-Christian hymn, therefore attribute v. 12d to the evangelist.

not resolved until v. 17 where the "name" is mentioned and the unnamed Logos thus identified with the Logos incarnate, Jesus Christ.

For non-Christian readers, especially the idea of "believing" (πιστεύειν) in the "name" of the Logos might have been particularly puzzling. Whereas the adherence to the Logos as expressed by family metaphors sounded unfamiliar or even strange, it could probably be understood as a metaphorical expression. On the other hand, the idea of the Logos having a particular "name" and also the idea of believing in that "name" are far away from ancient philosophical discourses about the Logos. Admittedly, some divine beings were associated with the Logos in Greek religious thought, but when Hermes or others were thought to be the Logos, the particular name of that divine Logos was not decisive at all. And even if πιστεύειν is attested in some ancient texts about the religious encounter with particular gods (e.g. regarding the positive expectation of a healing by Asclepius), such a characterization of the relationship with divine beings or the Logos is quite unfamiliar in ancient Greek thought.

f) The most difficult step, however, is made in v. 14 with the idea of the "incarnation" of the Logos. With the phrase ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, the prologue provides the strongest challenge for readers rooted in Greco-Roman thought as well as for Jewish readers. On the other hand, v. 14 obviously marks a climax of the prologue with the repetition of the initial term ὁ λόγος which was not explicitly used since v. 1.[191] Introduced by an affirmative καί and after the lengthy phrase in v. 13, the text seems to reach a new level. This is confirmed by the fact that in the third stichos of v. 14 a new grammatical subject is introduced, the "we" group of the believers. In this context, or at that step, the dominant term from the beginning, ὁ λόγος, is used again. While the term had not been used in the various verses characterizing the creational function of the Logos, its connection with the world, and its rejection, it is now resumed when its (or "his") incarnation is mentioned. Here, the prologue obviously reaches a new step, or even its pivot.

This is also marked by the verb used with regard to the Logos: ἐγένετο, a verb of action. The Logos that "was" in the beginning (with the ἦν marking a certain contrast with the ἐγένετο in v. 3), is now associated with a change: He[192] "became" flesh and "dwelled among us." The language underlines that this phrase pronounces something unexpected that goes beyond what was said before. And although the idea of the dwelling (or "tabernacling") of the Logos amongst humans is closely linked with earlier texts about Wisdom's dwelling in Israel (Sir 24:8), the subsequent mention of the "glory" is closely linked with the traditions about Wisdom (Sir 24:16; Wis 7:25–26; 9:11), and the

[191] On the structural observations see J. Frey, "Joh 1,14, die Fleischwerdung des Logos und die Einwohnung Gottes in Jesus Christus," in *Das Geheimnis der Gegenwart Gottes: Zur Schechina-Vorstellung in Judentum und Christentum* (ed. B. Janowski and E. E. Popkes; WUNT 318; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 244–47.

[192] Now the personal pronoun cannot be avoided any longer.

appearance of the divine glory in the holy tent and related traditions,[193] the association of the Logos with the term σάρξ marks a contrast[194] with the connection expressed by the verb ἐγένετο.

This phrase marks the critical point for any attempt to understand the Johannine Logos. Readers acquainted with the Scriptures of Israel and the Jewish Wisdom tradition may be aware of numerous traditions of Wisdom's coming, acting, and even dwelling in the world, or particularly in Israel or in Zion. But Wisdom, God's Word, and the Logos could never be imagined to "become flesh" (i.e. to become fully human in the sense that this implies "bones and blood and soul as well")[195] much less share human creational weakness, be mortal, and die. The contrast with the Divinity of the Logos and its creational function expressed in v. 3 should not be underestimated.

The rather abstract idea of "the Word" becoming "flesh" is, however, interpreted in the second stichos which provides an explanation by reference to a biblical thought pattern, the appearance of the divine glory in the tabernacle in the wilderness and its sapiential and eschatological reception: So the dwelling of Wisdom in Zion and the hope for the eschatological revelation of the divine glory provide a more concrete imagination as to how the presence of the Divine Logos in Jesus could be imagined. For readers acquainted with the biblical and Jewish tradition this could be an important link to understand the idea of incarnation: The Logos "became" flesh but did not abandon his identity as the Divine Logos. Whereas John 1:14aα remains abstract and puzzling, v. 14aβ provides some help for understanding.[196]

For Greco-Roman readers, however, the idea that a divine being "becomes" flesh or even a fully human being was equally puzzling. Of course, there were numerous tales that gods appeared in the form of humans or temporarily changed their appearance. And it is quite conceivable that interpreters have read John 1:14a on that background as expressing a mere epiphany or a temporary appearance of the Divine Logos in the shape of a human being or even a human body. But the use of the term "flesh" which was already used with a negative connotation in v. 13 was not easily reconcilable with the idea of an epiphany of the Divine, and by the use of that term, the author might have intended to deliberately exclude such an imagination either of a temporary metamorphosis or of a mere outward appearance or masquerade.

It is quite conceivable that ancient readers with a Stoic or Platonic background would have stumbled here and expressed the feeling that such an idea is inappropriate to what they could imagine as the Logos or, even more, as divine. A Platonic reading could have felt forced to insert some more distinctions in order to protect the divine elements from any mixture or amalgamation with the material world, or even weakness and mortality. For Stoic concepts, it was probably harder to accept that the universal Logos should be embodied in one human being. In any case, for readers of Greco-Roman education, John 1:14 provided a decisive stumbling stone in their reading of the Johannine prologue, and the echoes from early pagan readers such as Celsus[197] can confirm this.

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[193] Cf. Frey, "Joh 1,14, die Fleischwerdung des Logos," 250–56 (n. 191).

[194] Even more so, when the word σάρξ was mentioned before in v. 13 in a rather negative context: the birth from God is contrasted with the birth from the "will of flesh."

[195] McHugh, *John 1–4*, 51–52 (n. 27).

[196] Cf. Frey, "Joh 1,14, die Fleischwerdung des Logos," 250–56 (n. 191).

[197] Cf. J. G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (STAC 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 62–68. See, e.g. Origen, *Cels*. 4.14, 18: "God is good, beautiful, happy, and in the highest degree of beauty and excellence. Therefore,

g) The last step in the reflection on the Logos is provided in v. 17 when, for the first time in the gospel, the name "Jesus Christ" is mentioned. As v. 17 is linked with the preceding verse by a (rather explicative than strictly causal) ὅτι, and "grace" (v. 16) and "grace and truth" (v. 14) were mentioned before as gifts of "his fullness" (v. 16) or effects of the glory of the incarnate Logos, it is now clear for the readers that the Logos which had been in focus since the beginning is now called by his name, "Jesus Christ." The Logos is embodied in a human figure, Jesus Christ, or – as he is called later – Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth (John 1:45; 6:42). In the following narration, the perspective will be reversed: Jesus Christ, whose appearance, ministry, and even death are narrated, is, according to the information given in advance to the readers, the Logos incarnate, or even more provokingly, the Divine Logos that is from the beginning, or – as v. 18 finally adds, "the Only-begotten, God."

Here, the vertiginous line of thought comes to its climax, and the paradox of incarnation seems most forcefully stated. Readers acquainted with biblical and Wisdom traditions may have had some clues for connecting the ideas of the prologue with those traditions and especially the tradition of the eschatological revelation of the divine glory in adoption of the earlier Shekhina traditions, but for Greco-Roman readers, the paradox will be more difficult or puzzling as the truly Divine could not "become" a fully human being without either its true Divinity or its true humanity being questioned.

On the other hand, it is noticeable that a number of ideas about the Logos in the Johannine prologue could appear rather familiar, or to a certain extent acceptable, for readers with such a Greco-Roman background. And the text could take them at least to a certain point at which the difficulties then could become insurmountable – or exegetical operations as mentioned before from the prologue's second century interpreters could be used to cope with the textual and conceptual difficulties and to integrate the gospel text into a wider philosophical framework.

4. An Open Opening and Its Hermeneutic Potential

This reading experiment can at least show the hermeneutical potential of the opening of the Fourth Gospel. If the opening is read as it is, open for

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if he comes down to people, he must submit to change, a change from good to bad, from beauty to ugliness, from happiness to misfortune, and from what is most excellent to what is most evil. Who would choose such a change? … God would not accept such a change … Either God truly changes, as these say, into a human body, and it has already said that this is impossible. Or, he does not change himself, but makes those who see think (that he does), and he misleads them and lies" (ibid., 64). See also on Porphyrius' criticism of the Johannine Logos ibid., 148.

readers who start reading the text, its "attractivity" can be imagined. Only from certain presuppositions about the background and education of the gospel's first readers, can commentaries narrow down the potential width of readings and semantic dimensions in order to focus merely on biblical, sapiential, or Jewish traditions. But such an interpretation ultimately conceals the resonances the text was able to trigger. In view of the various dimensions the term ὁ λόγος could imply in antiquity, the connectivity of the Johannine text and particularly its opening becomes evident. The use of the term is not only a philosophical lure[198] but a hermeneutical tool comparable to the gospel's open metaphors of, for example, bread, water, and light so skilfully connected with the christologically definite "I am" formula, all of which have the force to attract readers from a wide range of experiences and to draw them to the christological message of the gospel.

The argument from the early reception of the prologue should also be considered. If the wide range of notions of the term λόγος can be perceived in the background "before" its usage in John and again in the receptions "after" the Johannine text, is it then plausible to consider the meaning in John 1:1–2 so narrowly? Describing the history and usage of the term in such an "hourglass pattern" lacks historical plausibility. Exegesis should be perceptible of the wide range of possible resonances of a text, even if in the end a more precise determination of the intended meaning and the concept developed in the text is sought after.

VI. Concluding Perspectives

1. John in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Stoa, Platonism and Hermetism, Torah, Memra, Hokhma or Sophia – Greek philosophical thought and biblical or early Jewish tradition: How do they interact in the Johannine use of the term Logos in the beginning of the gospel?

It is clear that from the text the more obvious link is with the biblical and Jewish tradition, the Septuagint, especially Genesis, Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. The closest linguistic parallels to the use of the term Logos can be found in Philonic thought where the Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom tradition is adopted, albeit within a more developed philosophical framework. Thus, the Jewish Wisdom tradition is the most obvious pattern of thought behind parts of the Johannine prologue.

But on the other hand, the philosophical notions of the term λόγος cannot be overlooked and should not be suppressed or pushed aside in a

[198] Cf. Theobald, *Fleischwerdung*, 26 (n. 5).

commentary. They are part of the wider context of the term, and for hearers or readers living in the Greco-Roman world, in Ephesus, or elsewhere, the resonances or overtones of the term, referring to cosmological or ethical aspects, and the connection with pagan deities such as Hermes were widely present.

John 1:1–4 with the Logos as a divine figure, mediator of the creation of the "whole" world which gives life and light could first be read in such a context as well. And even the presence of the Logos in the world, and the non-perception or even rejection (John 1:10–11) could still be understood in philosophical terms, although an interpretation in terms of Jewish wisdom theology is more appropriate and clearly suggested by the parallels.

The most difficult aspect of the prologue, the "incarnation" of the Logos in a certain human being, is unparalleled and, to some respect, inconceivable in pagan Greek thought, *and* in Early Jewish traditions, the image of the Logos "tabernacling" clearly suggests a reading in the light of the biblical story of creation, the tabernacle, and the hope for eschatological revelation of the divine "*doxa*." Thus, the continuation of the text makes a further reading in light of the philosophical tradition impossible, but until there, ancient readers might have also read the tale of the Logos in the context of the widespread use in philosophical thought.

Obviously, early readers of John in the second century took that path and read the gospel or at least its prologue in such a wider context. The development of a Logos Christology on the basis of Philonic and popular philosophical thought by Justin Martyr is not derived from the Johannine pattern, but it provides an analogy to how the notion of the Logos could be adopted. And if Justin was aware of the Gospel of John and its utilization of Logos, the Johannine adoption of the term might have encouraged its further christological reception, but there is no reference to the Johannine prologue in Justin.

Contemporary philosophical or gnosticizing readings of the prologue by Valentinians such as Heracleon or Ptolemaeus clearly show the difficulties John 1:3 (or even 1:14) could provide for current philosophical (Middle Platonist) concepts of the Logos. Since they understood the term as a reference to a transcendent reality, they felt the need to introduce further distinctions between the eternal divine sphere and the creator of the world or the one who was incarnate. Such a distinction is not implied in the Johannine text in which the Logos that was involved in the creation of the world and the Logos that was later incarnate in a single human being is inseparably the same Logos that "was in the beginning" and that was – and is – "God."

The Valentinians' readings may be considered inadequate interpretations of John, introducing a cosmological interest which is alien to John, but they demonstrate that the philosophical nuances of the term Logos

were perceptible for Greek readers, and that the opening of John at least evokes some aspects of Greek philosophical thought. Thus, the beginning of John is in itself an exercise in cross-cultural communication. And although the majority of John's first readers were probably rooted in biblical and Hellenistic-Jewish thought, they lived in a world in which terms such as Logos had numerous overtones.

2. Methodological Perspectives for History-of-Religions Research

In consequence, Johannine interpretation cannot omit those dimensions in favour of a "pure" biblical or "Jewish" interpretation. Such a reading is too narrow and finally misleading, although the semantically dominant perspective of the Johannine prologue is from Genesis and the Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom tradition. The dichotomy between biblical/Jewish and Hellenistic contexts that has dominated history-of-religions research for long should be abandoned in favour of a less one-sided and more sensitive interpretation.

Another methodological insight may arise for history-of-religions work: For long, the reconstruction of the history-of-religions "backgrounds" has been predominantly author-centered and production-oriented, explaining the making of the text from its immediate background or possible sources (e.g. a Wisdom myth or a Logos hymn). If history-of-religions work is conceptualized in a wider, more reception-oriented manner, it aims at illuminating the context within which a text was (or could be) understood. Of course, such an approach may also consider more remote contexts and the evaluation of the different horizons requires some hypothetical reasoning about the early readers of a text and the world they lived in, but such reasoning about the "background" of the author and his "community" of addressees is also implied in the traditional production-oriented approaches.

In my view, a combination of both approaches is most appropriate. Of course, some of the readings of John in the second century may be misinterpretations of the text, tendentiously introducing the gnostic *pleroma* into the first verses of John and creating distinctions which are alien to the Johannine text and were not yet in view for its very first readers. On the other hand, they show the difficulties in communicating the Johannine view of divine revelation in the Logos Incarnate in a world for which incarnation is rather inconceivable and the relationship between the Divine and the world is conceptualized in a manner quite different from biblical and also early Jewish thought. Later pagan critics such as Celsus confirm those difficulties, but they plainly rejected the gospel whereas the Valentinians interpreted it in a manner acceptable for them.

Finally, the consideration of the resonances of the Johannine text in its various contexts and the skilful design of its opening to address not only

readers acquainted with the language of the Christian tradition but possibly a wider audience may again shed light on the endeavour of creating a novel language for communicating the gospel message to contemporary readers and across cultural boundaries.

"Spirit" (*Pneuma*) in Greco-Roman Philosophy and the Gospel of John

Craig R. Koester

Reading John's gospel in relation to Greco-Roman philosophical discourse has seemed natural for some interpreters and yet peculiar for others. Decades ago C. H. Dodd construed the Fourth Gospel as an appeal to cultured Hellenistic readers. From the opening reference to the λόγος (*logos*) in John 1:1 to the central role of light imagery in the narrative, Dodd saw the Fourth Evangelist conveying the significance of Jesus in dialogue with what he called "the higher religion of Hellenism." He thought the content of the gospel was clearly connected with the tradition of the early church, and yet it was being reshaped as the Christian message moved beyond its early Jewish context in ways that engaged the questions and perspectives of readers in the Hellenized world.[1]

In the 1950s and 1960s, however, attention turned increasingly to John's relationship to Judaism. Interpreters like Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis Martyn emphasized how the gospel gave prominence to questions that emerged from controversies between the followers of Jesus and members of the synagogue who did not profess faith in Jesus.[2] The *logos* imagery in the first chapter has strong resonances with biblical and later Jewish tradition, as do images like light, bread, and water, which play a major role in

[1] C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 6–10. Dodd saw the Hermetic literature as an expression of the religious interests of a Hellenized audience and explored it as a way of discerning John's appeal to such readers. See C. R. Koester, "Progress and Paradox: C. H. Dodd and Rudolf Bultmann on History, the Jesus Tradition, and the Fourth Gospel," in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* (ed. T. Thatcher and C. H. Williams; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 49–65.

[2] R. E. Brown's early interest in John and Judaism was evident in his article "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," *CBQ* 17 (1955): 403–19 and 559–74. This interest was more fully developed in his commentary, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), esp. 1:LXII–LXIV. J. Louis Martyn identified conflict with the synagogue as the dominant feature shaping the message of John's gospel. See his *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

the narrative. The principal disputes in the gospel concern the identity of Jesus in relation to Jewish tradition, including the question of whether he could be called "prophet" and "Messiah," whether his actions violated Jewish law, and whether the idea that he was one with God constituted blasphemy (John 5:18; 7:25–31, 40–44; 10:33). Accordingly, the central part of the gospel presents Jesus' identity in relationship to the Jewish Scriptures and festivals, portraying him as the fulfillment of Jewish hopes.[3]

Yet alongside the issues that center on distinctly Jewish concerns, the narrative reflects an interest in the significance of Jesus for the wider Greco-Roman world. At the climax of Jesus' public ministry, a group of Greeks arrive and want to see Jesus (12:20). They are not able to do so at that point in the narrative, but the context anticipates that after his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus will draw people of all sorts – including Greeks – to himself through the work of his disciples (12:32). Then in the crucifixion scene, the sign above the cross announces Jesus' kingship in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (19:20). It seems clear that the evangelist considered Jesus important for people from all those backgrounds. The final form of the text assumes that some readers would need to be told what the terms "rabbi" and "Messiah" meant, which implies that the writer envisioned a broad audience that included people from non-Jewish backgrounds (1:38, 41; 20:18).

It is significant that the language used in John's gospel is capable of evoking a wide range of associations, which could come from Scripture, Jewish tradition, and the wider Greco-Roman context. Images such as light, water, bread, and shepherding, along with the act of footwashing and concepts like truth and freedom, would have engaged the imaginations of various types of readers. As the gospel does so, it appropriates certain common ways of understanding the images, actions and concepts, but it also transforms them in order to disclose what God is doing in the story of Jesus.[4]

For Colloquium Ioanneum, I have been asked to explore the theme of the πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) or Spirit, which plays an important role in John's gospel from chapter 1, where the *pneuma* descends on Jesus, to chapter 20, where the crucified and risen Jesus breathes the *pneuma* into his disciples. In between, Jesus speaks of the *pneuma* as the agent of new birth, who meets the human thirst for a God who is *pneuma*; and in the Farewell

[3] Debates involve issues of doing work on the Sabbath (John 5:1–46), Jesus' claim to be the bread of life at Passover (6:1–71), to be a source of water and light at Booths (7:2, 37–39; 8:12), and Messiah at Dedication (10:22–39) (Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:201–04 [n. 2]).

[4] C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 15–32.

Discourses the *pneuma* is called the Advocate or παράκλητος (*paraklētos*), who abides with the disciples, bearing witness to the sin of the world and to the truth of Jesus.

I have also been asked to consider how John's references to *pneuma* might relate to ancient philosophical discourse. The question is not a simple one, because in many ways it seems more promising to relate the theme to Scripture and Jewish tradition. For example, the gospel first mentions the *pneuma* after a Jewish delegation has raised questions about hope for the coming of the anointed one, Elijah, and the prophet like Moses (1:19–25). The report about the descent of the *pneuma* on Jesus therefore suggests that Jesus fulfills those expectations, since the *pneuma* was connected with commissioning for Israel's prophets and kings.[5]

The discussion of new birth from water and *pneuma* (3:5) is part of the broader theme of water and washing in Jewish practice (1:24; 2:6; 3:22–30) and it could recall the hope for spiritual transformation as God gives Israel a new spirit.[6] Jesus' promise of living water, which anticipates the gift of God's *pneuma* to believers, is a response to Jewish and Samaritan disputes over the place of true worship, and the water imagery recalls the story of Jacob and the water flowing from the rock during Israel's wilderness journey (4:1–26).[7] The image of living water is directly connected to *pneuma* during the Jewish festival of Booths, where water imagery played a major role. In that same context, people respond by debating whether Jesus is claiming to be the prophet like Moses or perhaps the Messiah (John 7:37–44; Zech 14:8, 16).[8] Finally, the way Jesus breathes *pneuma* into the disciples on Easter evening recalls the way that God breathed

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[5] On prophets see Num 11:25; 1 Sam 10:10; Isa 42:1; 61:1. On kings see 1 Sam 16:3; Isa 11:2; cf. *T. Judah* 24:1–6; *Pss. Sol.* 17:37. Cf. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:66 (n. 2); F. Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Johannesevangeliums* (Frankfurter theologische Studien 16; Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1974), 23–25; G. M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 55–59; J. W. Bittner, *Jesu Zeichen im Johannesevangelium: Die Messias-Erkenntnis im Johannesevangelium vor ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund* (WUNT 2/26; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 139–43.

[6] Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26–27; *Jub.* 1:23. See R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Vol. 1 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 370.

[7] Gen 29:1–12; Exod 17:1–7; Num 20:2–13; 21:17. On these and other Jewish traditions concerning the well see B. Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2:1–11 and 4:1–42* (ConBNT 6; Lund: Gleerup, 1974), 162–73.

[8] Invoking the image of water in John 7:37–39 seems to recall practices associated with the festival of Booths. In the rites held at the temple in Jerusalem, water was drawn from the Gihon spring and poured onto the altar, as prayers for rain were offered (*m. Sukkah* 3:4; 4:1–4; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 197–98 (n. 4).

pneuma into the first human being at the time of creation (John 20:22; Gen 2:7).

Given the pervasive use of Jewish elements in these passages about the *pneuma*, it is challenging and yet intriguing to ask how the theme might have engaged readers of non-Jewish background, whose outlook was informed primarily by philosophical discourse. To consider this question, we will take a number of steps: First we will consider how the term *pneuma* was used in philosophical sources and identify the issues and perspectives that were associated with that term. Second, we will explore the theme more fully in John's gospel, noting the way it functions within the Johannine worldview. Third, we will consider recent proposals on the way John's use of the term *pneuma* might relate to Stoic thought. Fourth, we will consider alternative ways of construing the relationship by focusing on the comment that "God is *pneuma*" (John 4:24).

I. *Pneuma* in Philosophical Sources

Greco-Roman philosophical writers referred to *pneuma* in various ways, but the main perspectives can be seen as a conversation that begins with physical science and then expands to include matters such as ethics. Philosophical interest in the notion of *pneuma* drew from the physical sciences and medical theories about the human body. The term was connected to the wind that moves through the world outside the body, as well as to the breath that comes from within it. One line of thinking was that people received the life-giving energy associated with *pneuma* through the air they breathed, as well as through food and drink. Once inside the body, the *pneuma* was transformed, so that it circulated through the blood and gave people the ability to move and think.[9]

Writers in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. refined this idea. Some thought that as air was breathed in, it traveled to the heart, and then was transformed by the heat of the body into "vital *pneuma*," which animates the entire person. Others thought that some *pneuma* also traveled to the brain, where it became "psychic *pneuma*" or "soul *pneuma*," which gave people the power to sense things.[10] Aristotle agreed that *pneuma* distin-

[9] See the discussion of Hippocrates in H. Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα," *TDNT* 6:332–59, esp. 353.

[10] H. von Staden, "Body, Soul, and Nerves: Epicurus, Herophilus, Erasistratus, the Stoics, and Galen," in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (ed. J. P. Wright; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 79–116, esp. 93–96; D. Baltzly, "Stoic Pantheism," *Sophia* 42 (2003): 3–33, esp. 25.

guished living things from lifeless matter, but he argued that *pneuma* was inherently present in the body rather than being taken in through the air. New life began when the *pneuma* associated with the body's vital heat was transmitted through the bodily fluid that went from father to mother during the process of reproduction.[11]

The most significant thinking about *pneuma*, however, was done by the Stoics, who gave it a central place in their understanding of the world. The Stoics understood the universe to be a unified whole. They had a monistic worldview in which everything that comprised the world was understood in material terms. Some matter is active and some matter is passive. The active matter performs action and the passive matter receives action. The Stoics referred to the active principle as *logos* and to the passive principle as ὕλη (*hylē*), and together *logos* and *hylē* formed the universe.

The Stoics associated the elements of earth, water, wind, and fire with these active and passive principles. Earth and water are passive *hylē* and receive action, whereas wind and fire are active elements that perform action and belong to the *logos* – and for the Stoics, the *logos* could be called "god." When taken together, the union of wind and fire creates the special combination called *pneuma*. This *pneuma* was a kind of energy that operated in the world and it too could be called "god."[12] The *pneuma* was material and could be compared to a warm wind or breath that passes through all other bodies.

The Stoics thought that *pneuma* operated at three levels. First, *pneuma* works in inanimate objects by providing the cohesion or *hexis* that enables them to hold together. Second, *pneuma* operates more fully in plants, giving them their nature or φύσις (*physis*) and enabling them to live and grow. Third, *pneuma* works even more fully in animals, giving them a ψυχή (*psychē*) or soul. In human beings this third aspect of *pneuma* gives people the capacity to form moral judgments. It creates the faculty known as the ἡγεμονικόν (*hēgemonikon*), which enables people to process their sense perceptions and determine whether to accept or reject them.

The Stoics said that as the *pneuma* moved back and forth it created a tension or *tonos* in things. One might picture it as the vibration that occurs when someone plucks the string on a musical instrument. This idea provided the Stoics with a way to understand the body's physical movements. When people walk, the *pneuma* vibrates and enables the center of con-

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[11] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 6:354 (n. 9); G. Freudenthal, *Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance: Heat and Pneuma, Form and Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 106–48; A. P. Bos and R. Ferwerda, "Aristotle's *De Spiritu* as a Critique of the Doctrine of *Pneuma* in Plato and His Predecessors," *Mnemosyne* 60 (2007): 565–88.

[12] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 6:356, 358 (n. 9).

sciousness to stay in touch with the legs and other parts of the body. When the level of pneumatic tension is correct, people move smoothly, but if the tension is not correct then faulty movements occur.

That concept also applied to ethical behavior.[13] As sense perceptions enter the body, people must use their reason and its *hēgemonikon* to decide how to respond. If the tension of the *pneuma* in the soul is correct, then people will rightly determine what to do with their sense perceptions by asking what is proper in terms of virtue. But sometimes a person's passionate beliefs may interfere with reason. When that happens, the person responds in a manner that is contrary to reason, and that in turn makes the pneumatic tension erratic and incorrect.[14]

The Stoics' materialistic worldview differed from that of the Platonists, who posited a transcendent world above and a visible world below. Within the Platonic universe, the notion of a *pneuma* did not play a significant role. Plato used the term in connection with human respiration, but did not make a broader attempt to link the *pneuma* to physical movement or consciousness (*Tim.* 78–79, 82e, 84d). Later, some of the Middle Platonists like Posidonius and Antiochus of Ascalon actually agreed with the Stoics that *pneuma* was a kind of fiery energy that was active in the world.[15]

Philo of Alexandria went further in adapting the Stoic notion of *pneuma* to a Platonic worldview. He followed the Stoics in thinking that all matter was permeated by *pneuma*, which allowed it to cohere. He thought there were non-rational aspects to the soul, which were operative in animals and people, but identified the higher functioning of the *pneuma* with the rational soul in human beings, which was not material. That higher aspect of the *pneuma* in the soul was associated with the *logos* and with the mind or *nous*, which exercises the capacity of reasoning and is the aspect of human life that is closest to God and transcendent reality.[16]

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[13] J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 86–89.

[14] G. Buch-Hansen, *"It Is the Spirit That Gives Life": A Stoic Understanding of Pneuma in John's Gospel* (BZNW 173; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 96.

[15] J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 108–09. In a helpful overview of developments in philosophical discourse, Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that in the period from 100 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. there was not a simple blending of Platonic and Stoic ideas into a new pattern. Rather, writers who were primarily working with one philosophical system incorporated ideas from the other system into their own ("Setting the Scene: Stoicism and Platonism in the Transitional Period in Ancient Philosophy," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* [ed. T. Rasimus, T. Engberg-Pedersen, and I. Dunderberg; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 1–14).

[16] W. Bieder, "πνεῦμα," *TDNT* 6 (1969): 372–75; H. Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen*, Vol. 1/1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967; German original 1919); M. Pulver, "The Experience of the Pneuma in Philo," in *Spirit and*

II. *Pneuma* in John's Gospel

When we turn to John's gospel we engage a different worldview, which centers on different issues. The gospel's perspectives do not engage the questions of physical science that were prominent in philosophy. The prologue does say that all things were created by the *logos*, which is the source of life for human beings (John 1:1–4), and the Johannine understanding of life or *zōē* includes a material dimension. The people whom the *logos* creates have bodies made of flesh and blood. So when the *logos* becomes flesh in Jesus, he gives people gifts that sustain and enhance physical life. Such gifts include the healing of legs and eyes, and gifts of wine and bread. The gospel recognizes the importance of the physical world, but we will see that the writer does not derive his understanding of the divine *pneuma* from an aspect of the human constitution.

To be sure, the gospel assumes that embodied life includes a *pneuma*, which is linked to emotion. When Jesus saw people grieve over the death of Lazarus and when he later anticipated his own betrayal, he became disturbed "in *pneuma*" (11:33; 13:21). But the gospel's use of the expression "in *pneuma*" for an emotional disturbance reflects a common way of referring to human experience. The expression was used in the Septuagint as well as in philosophical sources, and was not limited to Stoic views of anthropology (1 Kgs 20:4–5; Pss 104:29 [103:29 LXX]; 143:4 [142:4 LXX]). John shows little interest in exploring the various physical theories that might inform such a use of the term.

What is of central interest in the gospel is the question of how people receive life in its fullest sense (John 20:30–31). Such life involves a knowing and trusting relationship with the Creator, which entails a framework of thought that differs from Stoicism. According to John, the world has been created by God through the *logos*, and the world has also become alienated from God. Instead of knowing and trusting the God who made them, the people who belong to the world are estranged from him. For the relationship to be restored, they must be brought to know and trust God. So through the words and actions of Jesus, and through his crucifixion and resurrection, God communicates the truth of his power and love to the world, in order to evoke the faith that brings true life. And the *pneuma* plays an integral role in the process.

In chapter 1, the *pneuma* is introduced as God's agent of revelation. John the Baptist says that he did not know the one whom God was sending, but when the *pneuma* descended and remained on Jesus, John recognized that this was the Son of God – the Lamb of God, whose sacrificial death

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Nature: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982; German original, 1945), 1:107–21.

would take away the sin of the world (1:29–35). According to this passage, God's redemptive action centers in Jesus, yet Jesus' identity cannot be known simply by appearances. It is hidden, so the *pneuma* sent by God must make it known.[17]

In chapter 3, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus identifies God's *pneuma* as the means through which God brings about new birth. It is this new birth that empowers people to see and enter God's kingdom. In this context the basic level of human existence is that of flesh or *sarx*. Flesh, in John's gospel, is associated with human limitation and mortality rather than with sin, as in Paul's letters. Flesh lacks the capacity to generate the life with God that comes through faith. Faith is evoked by the *pneuma* that comes from above. In a complex wordplay, Jesus compares the *pneuma* of God to the wind, which blows where it wills. The imagery emphasizes that God's *pneuma* is beyond human control or comprehension. But like the wind, God's *pneuma* can be known through its effect on people. Jesus says that what is born of God's *pneuma* is itself *pneuma*, using the term for the faith that is the fruit of divine action (3:8).[18]

In John 3, Jesus' comments to Nicodemus begin with questions about seeing and entering God's kingdom (3:3–5), but they continue with comments about receiving life and eternal life, which are more typical Johannine expressions (3:15–16). The conversation initially focuses on the *pneuma* that comes from above, then focuses on God's Son, who has also come from above. God's *pneuma* and his Son are as closely connected in chapter 3 as they were in the testimony of John the Baptist in chapter 1. Here we find that the love of God, which is conveyed through the lifting up of his Son, and the activity of God's *pneuma* are directed toward the same end. That end is to overcome the world's separation from its Creator by evoking the faith that is true life.

Similar dynamics appear in Jesus' comments about living water in the conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 and with the crowd in the temple in John 7. Both passages use the image of thirst to describe the human need for life with God. Both also identify Jesus as the giver of the living water that meets the thirst for God and gives people life in its true sense. At one level, the image of living water may refer to Jesus' words or

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[17] M. M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 156–65. A different view is taken by C. Bennema, *The Saving Power of Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2/148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 160–67, who thinks that John 1 pictures the descent of the Spirit endowing Jesus with wisdom in a new way. But since the prologue identifies Jesus as the incarnate *logos*, this view is unlikely. The role of the *pneuma* is to reveal who Jesus already is.

[18] C. R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 137–43.

teaching, but on another level the living water is identified with the *pneuma*. In each case it is clear that *pneuma* is not something inherent in human life but is a gift that is given through Jesus. If Jesus' words are designed to evoke the faith that gives life (4:21, 39–42), that is also true of the *pneuma*, which people receive or "drink" in faith (7:37–39). Other passages in the gospel also show that the words of Jesus and the work of the *pneuma* are related forms of divine activity (3:34; 6:63).

The revelatory aspect of the *pneuma*'s work and its close connection to Jesus and his Father remain central in the Farewell Discourses.[19] Those chapters refer to the *pneuma* of truth, which is sent by God through Jesus, and that *pneuma* of truth functions as the Advocate or *paraklētos* for Jesus' followers. If Jesus himself is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6), the *pneuma* leads believers into an understanding of the truth that Jesus embodies (16:13). In a more specific way, the *pneuma* will not only "remind" the disciples of what Jesus said during his ministry but will "teach" them the significance of those words in the changing contexts of community life after Easter (14:26). If the risen Jesus and his Father promise to make their abiding place or μονή (*monē*) among believers (14:23), it is the *pneuma* that makes their presence known by abiding (μένω, *menō*) with the community (14:17).

Again, the *pneuma* is not inherent in the structure of the world or its people. The gospel says that the world neither sees nor knows the *pneuma*, and that the *pneuma* cannot be received by the world (14:17). Instead, the *pneuma* reveals the world's sin and unbelief, it reveals God's judgment on the demonic ruler of this world, and it reveals the righteousness of Jesus who was condemned by the world (16:8–15). In these passages the world or *kosmos* is the sphere that is alienated from God and marked by unbelief. To say that the world cannot receive God's *pneuma* does not mean that unbelievers can never be brought to faith, as if that were ontologically impossible. Rather, the world cannot receive the *pneuma* while retaining its character as "world" in the Johannine sense. Where the *pneuma* is received it evokes faith, and that means that the recipient, by definition, cannot be identified with the world of unbelief.[20]

In the final chapters of the gospel, the crucified Jesus is said to "give over the *pneuma*" as his final action (19:31). That may simply be a way of

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[19] The distinctive use of the term *paraklētos* in John 14–16 has sometimes meant that those chapters are treated separately from the rest of the gospel. Among those who relate the *pneuma* in John 14–16 to the wider theme include Burge, *The Anointed Community* (n. 5), Bennema, *The Saving Power of Wisdom* (n. 17), and T. G. Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social Scientific Perspective* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2003).

[20] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. Hoare, and J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971; German original, 1941), 616.

saying that he stopped breathing and died, or it could be a way of showing that the *pneuma* of God will be given to people by the Jesus who was crucified as well as resurrected.[21] In any case, when the risen Jesus appears to the disciples on Easter evening, he first shows them the marks of crucifixion and then breathes into them the holy *pneuma* (20:22). The action suggests that on one level the *pneuma* is the agent of new life. But the specific directive that is given along with the *pneuma* is that the disciples are to forgive and retain sins (20:22–23). Those two actions of forgiving and retaining sins extend the redemptive and confrontational aspects of the work of Jesus and the *pneuma*, which were depicted earlier in the gospel. If Jesus and the *pneuma* reveal the world's sin and extend the hope of new life, this activity is to be carried out through the witness of the disciples after Easter (cf. 15:26–27).

III. Recent Proposals on *Pneuma* in John and Stoicism

The preceding discussion of *pneuma* in John's Gospel and philosophical texts has emphasized differences in outlook. The writers asked different questions and adopted different frames of reference. So having recognized the differences, we are not in a position to ask whether there are points of contact. Some scholars would say that there are many connections, and that John's treatment of the *pneuma* theme has actually been shaped by a Stoic worldview. Troels Engberg-Pedersen points out that John's prologue says that the *logos*, which is God, became flesh in Jesus (1:14). Although Christian tradition has identified that event with the virginal conception and birth of Jesus, the Fourth Gospel makes no mention of that idea. So Engberg-Pedersen points out that in Stoicism, *pneuma* and *logos* are two ways of referring to the same thing, and he proposes that the *logos* became flesh when the *pneuma* descended on Jesus, as witnessed by John the Baptist (1:32). The idea is that the incarnation of the *logos* occurs through the descent of the *pneuma* at Jesus' baptism rather than at his conception.[22]

Gitte Buch-Hansen attempts to trace this Stoic interpretation of the *pneuma* throughout the gospel. After Jesus is infused with the *pneuma* at his baptism, he expresses the power of the *pneuma* through words and

[21] R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1082–83; F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 505, 508–09.

[22] T. Engberg-Pedersen, "*Logos* and *Pneuma* in the Fourth Gospel," in *Greco-Roman Culture and the New Testament: Studies Commemorating the Centennial of the Pontifical Biblical Institute* (ed. D. E. Aune and F. E. Brenk; NovTSup 143; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 27–48.

deeds during his ministry, culminating in the crucifixion. Since the gospel defines God as *pneuma*, Jesus return' to the Father completes his transformation into *pneuma*, which retains its material sense (4:24; 13:1; 20:17). Because of this transformation, Jesus infuses the *pneuma* into his followers after Easter (3:3, 5; 20:22). That brings the story full circle: The Jesus who is regenerated by the *pneuma* at his baptism makes it possible for others to be regenerated through his gift of *pneuma*.[23]

Several things make this approach unpersuasive: First, the gospel depicts the *pneuma*'s descent on Jesus as the moment of revelation to John the Baptist rather than the transformation of Jesus himself. Apart from the *pneuma*, John the Baptist did not know the one whom God had sent, but through the *pneuma* he could recognize and bear witness to Jesus (1:29–34). There is nothing to suggest that Jesus himself underwent a transformation from an unregenerated being to one who was spiritually regenerated.

Second, the gospel may assume that all human beings have something called *pneuma*, which is related to the emotions, but interest centers on the *pneuma* of God which brings life through the evoking of faith. The Stoics developed a material understanding of *pneuma* that informed their approach to life in its physical, emotional, and ethical dimensions. But John's interest centers on the issue of life in relation to God, and how that life can be created through faith.

Third, the Stoics saw the world as a unified whole, in which the *pneuma* that bears the generative power of *logos* gives cohesion to all things. But John sees the world as alienated from its Creator. The *pneuma* is not inherent in the world, and the world as it is cannot receive the *pneuma* from God while retaining its character of unbelief. In terms of basic categories, the differences in perspective are far more striking than any similarities.[24]

IV. John and Stoicism on "God is *Pneuma*" (John 4:24)

An alternative approach is to ask how the Fourth Gospel's comments about the *pneuma* might have engaged the interest of readers whose outlook was informed by philosophy. The text uses language that would have evoked a range of associations for readers, and the narrative both appropriates and transforms those associations. A number of passages might be considered.[25]

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[23] Buch-Hansen, *"It Is the Spirit That Gives Life,"* 59 (n. 14).

[24] Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 6:357–59 (n. 9).

[25] Another example is Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3. Karl Olav Sandnes has pointed out that philosophical texts address questions of epistemology by using the principle that "like is known by like." Things that are earthly comprehend what is earthly; what is reasonable is known by reason; and the light that comes from within the eye

But an especially useful test case is Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4, where the theme of the *pneuma* is linked to other images that can be taken as a group. The dialogue progresses from thirst to living water, then to Jesus' role as prophet, to God's character as *pneuma*, and finally to worship that is not bound to a place but occurs in *pneuma* and truth.

The story is set at Jacob's well, where Jesus engages the woman in conversation about water. Although the starting point is ordinary drinking water, which is drawn from the well, Jesus takes the conversation to a different level by telling the woman, "Everyone who drinks from this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:13–14). To follow the conversation, readers need to move beyond the ordinary sense of thirst and water to understand what it conveys about divine action.

Readers of Greek or Roman background would have understood that water was essential for life, and that thirst was a way to speak about the desire for what gives life.[26] Moreover, in Latin as in Hebrew, the expression "living water" (*aqua viva*) could be used for the water that flowed from springs and streams, in contrast to the water found in cisterns and ponds (Varro, *Rust.* 1.11.2). So it would seem appropriate for Jesus to use that expression when speaking about the most desirable kind of water.[27] Jesus uses that expression, "living water," for what brings people to eternal life, which in the Fourth Gospel is life in relationship with God. The wider literary context makes clear that such life begins in the present, through faith, and continues beyond death through the promise of resurrection.[28] Yet at that point in the dialogue, what the "living water" itself might signify is left unstated.

The next step is that the woman asks for the water and Jesus shows remarkable insight into her personal history, enabling her to identify him as a prophet (4:19). Throughout the Greco-Roman world people assumed that prophets were divinely inspired. The oracles of Apollo that were delivered at Delphi and other locations were thought to be inspired by

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can discern the light that is outside of the eye. That same principle may be reflected in John 3, where the *pneuma* that comes from God is what enables people to recognize and relate to the God who is himself *pneuma*. See K. O. Sandnes, "Whence and Whither: A Narrative Perspective on Birth ἄνωθεν (John 3,3–8)," *Bib* 86 (2005): 153–73.

[26] On thirst as desire in Hellenistic texts see BDAG, "διψάω", 3.

[27] See W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 67; M. Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten: Eine symbolgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Supplements to *Philologus* 14/2; Leipzig: Dieterich, 1921), 1–46.

[28] Koester, *Word of Life*, 30–32 (n. 18).

spiritual forces, although the term *pneuma* was not always used.[29] Moreover, the Greeks often associated fresh flowing water with divine powers and with the Muses who inspired art, music, and poetry (Plutarch, *Pyth. orac.* [*Mor.* 402C–D]). In practice, the shrines where oracles were delivered were often located by streams or springs. The frequent connection between water and prophetic inspiration made it easy to use flowing water as a metaphor for inspired utterances. Lamenting the decline in prophecy in the late first century, Plutarch said it was as if the oracles "were streams of flowing water and a great drought of prophecy has spread over the land" (Plutarch, *Def. orac.* [*Mor.* 411F]).[30] From that perspective it would seem plausible to connect the gift of living water to a figure who was an inspired prophet.

Taking the conversation further, the woman asked a question that seemed suitable for a prophet: What is the proper location for worship? The specific issue reflected a longstanding dispute as to whether worship was to be centered in Jerusalem, as Jewish people thought, or on "this mountain," Mount Gerizim, as in Samaritan tradition (John 4:20). In response, Jesus said the time was coming when worship would not be defined by its location in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. Instead, it would reflect God's own character, for "God is *pneuma*, and those who worship him must worship in *pneuma* and truth" (4:24).

The idea that "God is *pneuma*" would have seemed quite plausible for a reader whose outlook was informed by Stoic philosophy. As noted earlier, the Stoics could refer to the vital energy that pervaded the universe as *pneuma* and god. Seneca referred to "the great creator of the universe, whoever he may be, whether an all-powerful God, or incorporeal Reason (*ratio*) … or divine Spirit (*divinus spiritus*) pervading all things from the smallest to the greatest with uniform energy" (*Helv.* 8:3).[31] He used that sense of God's presence throughout the universe as a basis for saying that the human ability to be in communion with God was not limited to any one place. He could say that so long "as I may keep my mind directed ever to

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[29] C. Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma: Communication with the Spirit World in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14* (WUNT 2/230; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 113–19; Kleinknecht, *TDNT* 6:343–52 (n. 9).

[30] See also Plutarch, *Mor.* 412B, 414C, and 432D; cf. 412B. On oracles and springs see Pausanias, *Descr.* 7.21.11–13, and on sacred springs 3.23.2; 3.24.7; 9.34.4. Shrines were built near water sources in and around Palestine as well as in Greece; the most famous was Paneas at the northern edge of Galilee. Cf. Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers*, 47–99 (n. 27); H. D. Betz, *Plutarch's Theological Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT 3; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 171–72.

[31] *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, Vol. I/2: *Texte zum Johannesevangelium* (ed. U. Schnelle, M. Labahn, and M. Lang; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2001), 233. Also see the texts noted on pp. 226–34.

the sight of kindred things on high, what difference does it make to me what soil I tread upon?" (*Helv.* 8:6).

Seneca could use the Stoic notion of God as the spirit that works within each person as a way of relativizing the importance of temples and sacred spaces. He emphasized the importance of proper understanding and said that "it is foolish to pray for this when you can acquire it from yourself. We do not need to uplift our hands towards heaven, or to beg the keeper of a temple to let us approach his idol's ear, as if in this way our prayers were more likely to be heard. God is near you, he is with you, he is within you." His point was that "a holy spirit indwells within us (*sacer intra nos spiritus sedet*)," a spirit that "marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian. As we treat this spirit, so are we treated by it," because, "In each good man a god doth dwell, but what god know we not" (*Ep.* 41:1–2).

Seneca sometimes engaged in rhetoric that seemed highly critical of traditional religious practices that focused on rituals and temples, because his emphasis was on a person's manner of thinking and on living a moral life. He could say, "Precepts are commonly given as to how the gods should be worshipped. But let us forbid lamps to be lighted on the Sabbath, since the gods do not need light," and let us "forbid men to offer morning salutation and to throng the doors of temples; mortal ambitions are attracted by such ceremonies, but God is worshipped by those who truly know Him (*deum colit qui novit*)" (*Ep.* 95:47). Yet despite such critical remarks, Seneca did not advocate a thorough revision of cultic practice. His interest was in cultivating a proper mindset and commitment to ethical conduct rather than pressing for change in traditional religious practices.[32]

It is important that for Seneca, the highest form of spirit, which can be called "god," is found in the human spirit or soul. God is entirely spirit (*animus*), mind (*mens*), and reason (*ratio*), so that in relation to human beings, god is most closely associated with the human spirit and mind (*Nat.* 1.Pref. 12–14). He could say, "Reason … is nothing else than a portion of the divine spirit (*pars divini spiritus*) set in a human body" (*Ep.* 66:12). Similarly, a "soul (*animus*) that is upright, good, and great" can be considered "a god dwelling as a guest in a human body"; therefore, to pursue the right course of life you should "rise" and "mould thyself to kinship with thy God," who is within you (*Ep.* 31:11). Doing so would mean leading a life in accordance with reason.

So returning to John's gospel, a reader whose perspectives had been shaped by Stoic thought might have found Jesus' remarks to the Samaritan woman appealing, because they call people beyond disputes about holy

[32] H. Wenschkewitz, *Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe Tempel, Priester und Opfer im Neuen Testament* (Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1932), 52. See pp. 49–67 for more extensive discussion of the Stoic treatment of cultic themes.

places to the higher calling of worship "in *pneuma* and truth" (John 4:23–24). At that level, there would be some degree of agreement. Yet tensions between worldviews would emerge when Jesus' comments are understood in relation to other comments about the *pneuma* in John's gospel. The Stoics could speak of a *pneuma* that was inherent in people, whereas John's gospel insists that the *pneuma* that brings life and empowers true worship must come from outside of a person. *Pneuma* is not equated with the human soul or mind. Rather, it comes "from above" (3:3, 5) and in the narrative is given to people by Jesus after his glorification through his death and resurrection (7:37–39). It is what the crucified and risen Jesus breathes into his disciples, which makes the activity of the *pneuma* in the lives of believers a post-Easter phenomenon (20:22; cf. 7:39; 16:7–15).

Jesus' comments to the Samaritan woman anticipate the post-Easter activity of the *pneuma* by saying that "the hour is coming" when people will worship in *pneuma* and truth (4:23a). But he brings the future reality into the pre-Easter conversation by adding that the promised hour "is now here" (4:23b). The implication is that the way the *pneuma* will empower true worship by believers after Easter is already being accomplished through the words Jesus speaks during his ministry. The conversation uses the evocative image of living water to encompass both word and *pneuma*.[33]

Later, the gospel makes the connection between the words of Jesus and the action of the *pneuma* explicit when Jesus tells the disciples, "It is the *pneuma* that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are *pneuma* and life" (6:63). According to John, "God is *pneuma*" and Jesus' words "are *pneuma*." The same language is used for both. Such expressions reflect the idea that in the post-Easter period, the words that Jesus spoke become effective means for evoking faith through the agency of the *pneuma*. As *pneuma*, God works through the words of Jesus, enabling the words to summon people into the faith that is true life. People encounter the words of Jesus as *pneuma* (6:63), when God as *pneuma* makes the words the means through which faith is generated.

In the Fourth Gospel, the God who is *pneuma* actively "seeks" people to worship him. The goal is that people worship ἐν πνεύματι, which is often translated "in spirit," but is better translated "by the Spirit," because the point is that true worship is the product of God's own action – God's own seeking (4:23). The Fourth Gospel does not identify the hallmark of true worship as its inwardness, as if true worship occurs through the cultivation of the higher spiritual elements within a person. Rather, true worship is the product of God's action or seeking, which results in evoking the faith through which people recognize that God is true (3:33, 36). Worship in

[33] Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:178–80 (n. 2); Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, 212–18 (n. 7).

pneuma and truth is an expression of such faith. Note that Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman climaxes when the townspeople come to believe by means of the woman's testimony and the word (*logos*) of Jesus himself (4:39–42). That faith enables them to recognize what is "true" in Jesus (4:42). Their response is not inwardness, but witness, which is a form of the worship that God seeks.

To summarize: Stoic thought would associate *pneuma* with the *logos* that is inherent in things and is especially tied to the human ability to reason. From that perspective, worship in *pneuma* and truth would mean that offering worship to the God who is *pneuma* must be done according to reason. For John, however, the *pneuma* is tied to the word of Jesus, who was the unique embodiment of God's *logos* (1:14). Therefore, worship in *pneuma* and truth is an expression of the faith that Jesus' words and God's action create.

The Fourth Gospel refers to the *pneuma* in ways that have the potential to engage a wide spectrum of readers. The language is evocative and could appeal to readers whose perspectives were shaped by Greco-Roman religious practices and philosophical categories, as well as by those of Jewish Scripture and tradition. At certain points what is said may have seemed familiar to the readers, and to reinforce what they already held to be true. But as the dialogues progress, the familiar often becomes unfamiliar, as notions of the *pneuma* are reshaped Christologically and integrated into the Johannine worldview, challenging readers to reconsider what they know about God's ways in the world.

Confounding Foes and Counseling Friends

Parrēsia in the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Philosophy

George L. Parsenios

I. Introduction

The Greek word παρρησία is a compound noun consisting of the words πᾶς ("all"), and ῥῆσις ("statement" or "utterance"). The person who manifests *parrēsia* is a person who, literally, "says everything." The term is best translated by the phrases "bold speech," "frank speech," or simply "boldness" and "frankness."[1] *Parrēsia* was a political virtue in the city-states of ancient Greece, especially Athens. Whether sitting on public juries to decide the fate of an individual neighbor, or gathered in the public assembly to decide their fate collectively, Athenian citizens were asked to speak their minds with no filter and with no fear of punishment or reprisal.[2] The good of the city depended on frank and open discussion.

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[1] Frankness of speech has received considerable attention in recent decades. For extensive bibliography, see the following: J. T. Fitzgerald, ed., *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996), and idem, D. Obbink, and G. S. Holland, eds., *Philodemus and the New Testament World* (NovTSup 111; Leiden: Brill, 2004); D. Konstan et al., eds. and trans., *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism* (SBLTT 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). I have been especially guided in this paper by the excellent essay of D. Fredrickson, "ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ in the Pauline Epistles," in *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness*, 163–83 and especially his copious citations of primary sources. I express gratitude to J. T. Fitzgerald for generous and helpful advice in preparing this manuscript for publication.

[2] See D. Konstan, "Friendship, Frankness and Flattery," in *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech*, 1–14 (n. 1). The virtue of frank speech has been most usually connected to ancient Athens and to its democratic institutions, and the bibliography on this area of inquiry is quite large, including especially the following: S. Halliwell, "Comic Satire and Freedom of Speech in Classical Athens," *JHS* 111 (1991): 48–70; and J. Henderson, "Attic Old Comedy Frank Speech, and Democracy," in *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (ed. D. Boedeker and K. A. Raaflaub; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 255–74. For *parrēsia*'s relationship to virtues such as courage, see S. Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 52–53; and R. Balot, "Free Speech, Courage, and

The virtue of *parrēsia* would eventually appear in contexts far beyond the limits of the classical Greek cities in both time and space. In his famous essay "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," Peter Brown examines spiritual athletes in the later Roman Empire like St. Symeon the Stylite (390–459), who lived every day on a pillar praying.[3] Such figures were anxiously sought as intercessors before heaven because their holiness of life allowed them to speak to God with frank boldness, with *parrēsia*.

In ways closely related to both the political *parrēsia* of the ancient city, as well as to the pious *parrēsia* of Christian monks, Greek and Roman philosophers cultivated *parrēsia* in themselves and in their pupils as a tool of moral formation. If the fate of classical Athens depended on frank and open debate, the work of philosophers also required bold truth-telling and unvarnished instruction. "Παρρησία as a private virtue replaced παρρησία as a political right."[4] The teacher who shied away from frank and forthright correction of his pupils, out of either cowardice or the desire to flatter, failed in improving those entrusted to his care. Because *parrēsia* was such a critical component of moral formation, it was analyzed and evaluated at great length by the philosophers of the Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

The following paper will focus on both the political and philosophical discussions of *parrēsia*, in order to shed interpretive light on the meaning and function of *parrēsia* in the Gospel of John. In spite of the attention recently given to the bold speech of Jesus in John (see note 5), the connections between Jesus' boldness and the boldness of ancient philosophers and orators has not been made clear in the history of Johannine interpretation. The term *parrēsia* is generally translated in John in a non-technical sense, with words like "openly" or "publicly" or "clearly," rendering the association between the Johannine usage of *parrēsia* and other ancient treatments of "frank speech" unclear. Some interpreters of John deny the

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Democratic Deliberation," in *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity* (ed. I. Sluiter and R. M. Rosen; Mnemosyne Supplementum 254; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 233–60. This exclusive focus on Athens may be misplaced, as is made plain in M. Landauer, "Accountability and Advice in Greek Political Thought" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, May 2012) and idem, "*Parrhesia* and the *Demos Tyrannos*: Frank Speech, Flattery and Accountability in Democratic Athens," *History of Political Thought* 33 (2012): 185–208.

[3] P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971): 80–101. Boldness is also employed by the monks of the Egyptian Desert in their dealings with one another and with outsiders. See D. B. Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) esp. 172, n. 13.

[4] A. Momigliano, "Freedom of Speech in Antiquity," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (ed. P. P. Wiener; 4 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973–74), 2:260.

wider Greek sense of the term completely.[5] If one is careful not to claim too much, however, one can discern considerable points of contact between the *parrēsia* of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel and the *parrēsia* of ancient orators and philosophers.

II. Boldness among Both Foes and Friends

The first connection between the *parrēsia* of the philosophers and the *parrēsia* of Jesus exists on the level of categorization. Ancient thinkers consider boldness to be appropriate in two different contexts: in the presence of friends and in the presence of foes. Isocrates, for example, defines *parrēsia* as a "privilege which is openly granted to friends (φίλοις) to rebuke, and to enemies to attack each others' faults (ἁμαρτίαις)."[6] The second century Epicurean Philodemus defines two similar social settings for bold speech, one in which *parrēsia* is directed "toward all people," and another in which it is oriented "toward one's intimate associates."[7] The bold speech of Jesus is separated into similar categories, since he tells the High Priest that he spoke boldly (*parrēsia*) before the world in his public ministry (18:20; see also 7:26; 10:24; 11:14, 54), and he also speaks with *parrēsia* (16:25) privately with his disciples, whom he calls his friends (φίλοι, 15:13, 14). Jesus divides his bold speech into two categories (one more public, in which there is conflict, and one more intimate, among friends) which reproduce the categories of Isocrates and Philodemus.

III. Boldness, Cowardice and Vanity

The present paper will begin, however, not by attending to those occasions in which Jesus manifests *parrēsia*, but rather to the one place where he intentionally refuses to do so – in the early lines of John 7. Jesus is here aware that his opponents are trying to kill him (7:1). He avoids Judea. His brothers urge him to be bold. They say to him (7:3–4),

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[5] R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray et al.; Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1971), 291, n. 1, writes of John 7, "Παρρησία here does not, of course, mean, as it originally did in Greek, the right or the courage to appear in public, freedom of speech, openness …" With the recent work on "Boldness" in the entire New Testament, scholars of John see greater connections, especially W. Klassen, "Παρρησία in the Johannine Corpus," in *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness*, 227–54 (n. 1); and M. Labahn, "Die παρρησία des Gottessohnes," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums* (ed. J. Frey and U. Schnelle; WUNT 175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 321–63.

[6] *To Nicocles* 3.

[7] Pap.Herc. 1082, col. II.1–3, cf. *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism* (n. 1).

Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; for no one who wants to be widely known (ἐν παρρησίᾳ) acts in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ). If you do these things, show yourself (φανέρωσον σεαυτόν) to the world. (NRSV)

They accuse Jesus of being one of those timid souls whom we meet a few verses later who "would not say anything boldly (παρρησίᾳ)" for fear of being censured (7:13). Even though Jesus avoids acting with boldness here, or rather, precisely because he avoids it, certain features of the episode evoke ancient discussions of *parrēsia*. St. John Chrysostom makes the connections plain. Chrysostom identifies several qualities of *parrēsia* in the words of the brothers in 7:3–4 that correlate closely with philosophical discussions of the term (*Hom. Io.* 47:2).[8] Two issues deserve our inspection. According to Chrysostom, the brothers accuse Jesus of (1) cowardice and of (2) vainglory.

The accusation of cowardice is implicit in their first statement: no one acts in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ) whose goal is *parrēsia*. Both politicians and philosophers draw a similar contrast between acting in secret and acting with boldness, and they urge people to banish the fear that restrains their frank speech. Dionysius of Halicarnassus records in Greek a speech by Lucius Junius urging its listeners to replace their fear with *parrēsia* as follows:

Unhappy men, of what are you afraid (τί δεδοίκατε)? That you will suffer some harm if you follow my lead in giving free rein to the tongue? For I shall expose myself to the danger of declaring to them frankly (μετὰ παρρησίας) the justice of your cause, concealing nothing (οὐδὲν ἀποκρύψομαι). (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Rom. Ant.* 6.72.5)

In the same spirit, Demosthenes in his *Second Philippic* challenges the Athenians to move against Philip by insisting that he will speak with bold-

[8] Chrysostom notes one further element that might connect John 7:1–4 with ancient discussions of *parrēsia*. The issue is not so explicit in the text, but it seems implicit, so is worthy of mention. When they rebuke Jesus, his brothers show what Chrysostom calls "unseasonable freedom of speech" (*Hom. Io.* 47:2). Their freedom of speech is unseasonable because, as John 7:6 tells us, they did not believe, and yet felt fit to correct and instruct him because "they thought, that owing to their relationship with him, it was lawful for them to address him boldly" (47:2). But in response to their unseasonable freedom of speech, Chrysostom sees in Jesus only mildness, when he explains his inaction by saying simply, "My time has not yet come." He does not upbraid them or even correct them. Chrysostom says, "From this let us learn to master our anger, and not to give way to unworthy passion, though they be mean men who give us counsel. For … Christ meekly bore with unbelievers counseling him, when their counsel was improper and not from any good intention … Philosophers also showed their restraint and self-control by brooking without rebuke the unseasonable bold speech of their students, as when Cleanthes accepts gently the boldness of his pupils Baton and Sositheos" (Philodemus, *Stoicorum historia*, cols. XXII–XXIII), cf. D. Clay, "Philodemus on the Plain Speaking of the Other Philosophers," in *Philodemus and the New Testament World*, 63 (n. 1).

ness (μετὰ παρρησίας), and he will hide nothing (οὐκ ἀποκρύψομαι; Demosthenes, *Or. 6*, 31). No less than these orators, philosophers also contrasted *parrēsia* with acting in secret. Xenophon praises the Spartan king Agesilaus by saying that "he developed enmity against no one who spoke to him with boldness (τῶν παρρησιαζομένων), but rather guarded against those who hid their thoughts (κρυψίνους)" (*Ages.* 11:5). Finally, according to Dio (*Or. 77/78*, 42, 45), the person who speaks boldly

> does not hide his thoughts (οὐκ ἀποκρυπτόμενος) from [his kinsmen and fellow citizens]. … Therefore … one must behave with fullest frankness (παρρησίας) and independence, showing no reluctance or yielding in one's words.[9]

When the brothers of Jesus urge him not to act in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ) but to adopt *parrēsia*, they simply repeat a standard opposition common among both orators and philosophers. To choose secrecy (ἀποκρύψομαι, κρυψίνοος, ἐν κρυπτῷ) over *parrēsia* is to show fear and reluctance. Again, the brothers suggest that Jesus is like those in John 7:13 whose fear (φόβος) keeps them from speaking with frankness.

Chrysostom says that the brothers insult Jesus even further when they say that he seeks (ζητεῖ) to be known openly (ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι, 7:4). This statement assumes that Jesus is driven by vainglory. The key to understanding the brothers' comment is the phrase informing us that "they did not believe in him" (7:6). The disciples – who do believe – will later ask Jesus to show them the Father (14:8). The brothers do not ask this. They tell Jesus, "show yourself (σεαυτόν)" to the world. But Jesus does nothing "of himself," and makes this clear just a few verses later when he says (7:18): "The one who speaks on his own (ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ) seeks (ζητεῖ) his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him." Jesus' brothers are wrong to imagine that he "seeks" (ζητεῖ) to show himself (φανέρωσον σεαυτόν) to the world. He does nothing of himself (ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ), but seeks (ζητεῖ) only the glory of the Father. The brothers assume that the glory Jesus seeks is public fame. They make a "false distinction between glorious and inglorious … bold and cowardly."[10]

Philosophers regularly criticized those who turned *parrēsia* into an act of personal aggrandizement. In an extended passage on the subject, Dio writes,

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[9] Compare Plutarch, *Adul. am.* 36–37 (*Mor.* 74D).

[10] E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (2d ed.; ed. F. N. Davey; London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 311. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 308, shows the difference between seeking worldly glory and the glory of the Father by connecting the episodes in John 6 and 7:1–4 to the temptations in Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13 where the devil attempts to turn Jesus to the pursuit of worldly fame. The brothers of Jesus try the same here.

But to find a man who in plain terms (καθαρῶς) and without guile (ἀδόλως) speaks his mind with frankness (παρρησιαζόμενον), and neither for the sake of reputation (δόξης) nor for gain, but out of good will and concern for his fellow-men stands ready, if need be, to submit to ridicule and to the disorder and the uproar of the mob – to find such a man as that is not easy, but rather the good fortune of a very lucky city, so great is the dearth of noble, independent souls and such the abundance of toadies (κολακῶν), mountebanks, and sophists. In my own case, for instance, I feel that I have chosen that role, not of my own volition, but by the will of some deity. For when divine providence is at work for men, the gods provide, not only good counselors who need no urging, but also words that are appropriate and profitable to the listener. (*Or. 32*, 11–12)[11]

Malherbe draws several verbal parallels between the self-presentation here of Dio and Paul's self-presentation in 1 Thess 2:1–8. The Pauline passage reads as follows:

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα) in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives (ἐξ ἀκαθαρσίας) or trickery (ἐν δόλῳ), but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery (κολακείας) or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise (δόξαν) from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.[12]

The Greek words in the passages from both Paul and Dio indicate, first, that the two texts rely on similar patterns of self-presentation. They show this similarity, especially when placed in parallel columns as follows:

1 Thessalonians	*Dio Chrysostom*	
eparrēsiasametha	*parrēsiazomenon*	boldness/frankness
akatharsias	*katharōs*	purity of speech and motives
dolō	*adolōs*	guile/guileless
kolakeias	*kolakōn*	flattery/flatterers
doxan	*doxēs*	praise/reputation

Paul and Dio both present themselves as trustworthy teachers who are not interested in what is good for themselves, but only what is good for their audiences. Their boldness of speech is motivated by nothing but pastoral concern. The theme is common elsewhere. People wrong-headedly imagine that their vainglorious posturing is authentic *parrēsia*. In Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* (60:4), Favonius is described as "a man otherwise of no bad char-

[11] Translation taken from A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 45–46.

[12] Ibid.

acter, but who often thought that his insolent presumption (αὐθάδεια δὲ καὶ ὕβρει) was an imitation of Cato's boldness of speech (παρρησίαν)."[13]

Parrēsia that promotes the speaker is no *parrēsia* at all. It is grandstanding. According to Epictetus, authentic frankness is motivated only by a desire to benefit (ὠφελεῖν) the listener (*Diss*. 3.1.10–11). When Dio Chrysostom chastens the Alexandrians (*Or. 32*, 5), he begins his speech by asking them to "listen to an honest speech and welcome a frankness (παρρησίαν) whose aim is your own welfare (ἐπὶ τῷ συμφέροντι)." Plutarch insists, similarly, that one thing and one thing only motivates bold speech: the desire to do what is in the best interest (πρὸς τὸ καλόν) of the listener.[14] *Parrēsia* is not motivated by the ambition of the speaker, but by a concern for the listener.

It would seem, therefore, that even when Jesus does not engage in *parrēsia* in John 7:1–4, the Fourth Gospel is still engaged with ancient discussions of *parrēsia*. The simple and compact statement of the brothers of Jesus connects *parrēsia* in the Fourth Gospel with discussions about the pitfalls that one must avoid when employing *parrēsia*. On the one hand, one must not be too cowardly to speak. On the other hand, one must not turn bold speaking into the vice of self-promotion. Jesus' brothers accuse him of cowardice, because he will not behave with ambition, but his silence ensures that, when he does engage in bold speech, he does so for the proper reasons. And Jesus does, in fact, engage in bold speech just a few verses later. Our attention can now turn from Jesus' avoidance of bold speech to an examination of those places where Jesus does speak boldly, before both his opponents as well as before his friends. We will begin with bold speech before his opponents.

IV. Boldness between Opponents: *Parrēsia*, *Elenchus* and the Exposure of Sins

Jesus eventually follows his brothers to the feast in John 7.[15] As he speaks, the people of Jerusalem marvel and say (7:25), "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking boldly (παρρησίᾳ), and they are not

[13] In Plutarch's *Life of Dion* (8:1), those who seek to disparage Dion and injure his reputation do so "by actually giving to his virtues plausible names of vices; for instance, they called his dignity haughtiness, and his boldness of speech (παρρησίαν) self-will (αὐθάδειαν)."

[14] Plutarch, *Adul. am.* 11 (*Mor*. 55B). The Cynics were often censured for directing their *parrēsia* toward selfish displays rather than the benefit of their hearers. See discussion in Fredrickson, "ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ in the Pauline Epistles," 166–67 (n. 1).

[15] We have obviously to do with the sort of thing Giblin has described in C. H. Giblin, "Suggestion, Negative Response and Positive Action in St. John's Portrayal of Jesus (John 2:1–11; 4:46–54; 7:2–14; 11:1–44)," *NTS* 26 (1980): 197–211.

saying a word to him." When Jesus later describes his ministry before the High Priest, he says (18:20),

> I have spoken openly (παρρησίᾳ) to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the *Ioudaioi* come together. I said nothing in secret (ἐν κρυπτῷ).

Jesus thus characterizes his entire ministry as being infused with frank speech. Throughout the section ranging from chapters 7 to 11, Jesus speaks (7:26; 10:24; 11:14; 18:20)[16] and walks (11:54)[17] among the people of Israel in a bold posture of *parrēsia*. He is accused at 10:24 of not speaking with *parrēsia*, when he is asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us frankly (παρρησίᾳ)," but he quickly responds by saying, "I have told you, and you do not believe" (10:25). The problem is theirs, not his. He has not failed to speak boldly. They have failed to understand him when he did.[18]

But if Jesus assumes a posture of *parrēsia* in his public ministry, does he do so in a way that resembles the *parrēsia* of the philosophers? I believe he does, and that this can be demonstrated on several levels of abstraction. We can begin with two examples of bold speech in Lucian. In Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*, an Epicurean philosopher works together with Christians to demonstrate that Alexander of Abonuteichos is a charlatan and has no special relationship with God. Bold speech is designed to burst the bubble of pretension. The same mechanism drives Lucian's *The Dead Come to Life, or the Fisherman*, in which the personification of Bold Speech, a character named Parrēsiathēs, demonstrates that the philosophers who are his contemporaries are frauds and do not live up to the example of the grand old masters, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Jesus' ministry of *parrēsia* resembles the plot of both these works of Lucian, and especially that of Parrēsiathēs, because Jesus speaks to the contemporary heirs of Moses (5:45–47; 7:19) and Abraham (8:33–58) and insists that they, like the people whom Parrēsiathēs encounters, do not live

[16] The relevant passages are as follows: 7:26: "And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah?"; 10:24: "So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly'"; 11:14: "Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead'"; 18:20: Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret."

[17] In 11:54 we read: "Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples."

[18] R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2:734 (n. 10), writes, "During the ministry, 'the Jews' challenged Jesus to speak in plain words (x 24), but he claimed that the real problem was that they obstinately refused to believe what he said; this answer seems to imply that he was speaking plain words during the ministry."

up to the example of the ancestors that they claim to follow. Bold speech is designed to remove the veneer of false pretensions.

Even closer associations with philosophical discussions are possible to discern, especially when the comment of Isocrates from above is kept in mind. Isocrates said that bold speech provides a way for opponents to attack "one another's faults" (ταῖς ἀλλήλων ἁμαρτίαις) where the word for "faults" is ἁμαρτίαι. The association between boldness and ἁμαρτία is common, as when Dio Chrysostom refers to those who "employ fullest frankness (παρρησίᾳ) to rebuke those who go astray (ἁμαρτάνουσιν) … (*Or. 51*, 4) Jesus exposes the sins of his opponents regularly in his public ministry, especially in chapters 8 (8:21, 24, 34) and 9 (9:41) when he is said to be speaking boldly before the people of Israel (18:20).

To draw an even tighter connection with the comment of Isocrates, Jesus is not alone in exposing sins during his public ministry. If he rebukes his opponents for the sin of not believing in him, they rebuke him in turn for the sin of blasphemy. Isocrates says that opponents attack the sins of "one another" (ἀλλήλων), and such a mutual accusation of sin is what we see in the Fourth Gospel. The question, "Who is the sinner?" dominates John 9. The scene closes with the exposure of the sin of the Pharisees (9:42), but this comes only after the Pharisees attach the label of sinner to both Jesus (9:16, 24) and to the Blind Man (9:25, 34). Dueling opponents are here clearly "attacking each others' faults," to borrow the phrase of Isocrates.

Even more might be said on this point, as long as we recognize that we enter now into a slightly more speculative area of inquiry. Ancient discussions of bold speech did not rely exclusively on the term *parrēsia*, but used a variety of other terms as well, either in concert with the word *parrēsia*, or as synonyms for it.[19] The most common such terms are νουθετέω, ἐξουσία, ἐλευθεροστομέω, θαρρέω, and εὐτολμία – which are not significant for John – but also two other words that are significant for John: ἐλέγχειν (to expose, convict) and ἀλήθεια (truth). For instance, Philodemus pairs *elenchein* with *parrēsia* when he says that some people put on the pretense of being lovers of bold speech (φιλοπαρρησιάσται) and then he adds, "But when the rebuke comes, they have their pretense exposed (ἐλεγχόμενον)."[20] Bold speech accomplishes *elenchus*. Bold speech shows what people really are beneath the mask. Plutarch, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* (*Mor.* 66A), also sees ἐλέγχειν and boldness as being connected

[19] For the list cited here, see G. Scarpat, *Parrhesia: Storia del termine e delle sue tradizione in latino* (Brescia: Paideia, 1964), 11–45 and *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism*, 5, n. 11 (n. 1).

[20] Philodemus, *Lib.* XVIb.5–8. Translation in *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism*, 115 (n. 1).

when he says that the person who seeks moral improvement needs a "friend to take us to task (ἐλέγχοντος), to be frank (παρρησιαζομένου) with us …"

As for ἀλήθεια, Demosthenes says, in his *Second Philippic* (*Or. 6*, 31), "I vow that I will boldly tell you the truth (τἀληθῆ μετὰ παρρησίας ἐρῶ)." In Lucian's *Fisherman*, if the character *Parrēsiathes* is the personification of *parrēsia*, it is significant that he is eventually supported in his trial by the personification of other virtues (17), including Investigation (Ἔλεγχος) and Truth (Ἀλήθεια). Finally, when asked to identify himself before the personification of Philosophy (19), he says that his name is "Frankness, son of Truthful (Ἀληθιῶνος), and of Investigator (Ἐλεγξικλέους)," marking another very tight association of *parrēsia*, *elenchein* and *alētheia.*

The association of these three terms and ideas makes it interesting that Jesus asks his opponents in John 8:46, "Which of you convicts (ἐλέγχει) me of sin (ἁμαρτίας)? If I speak the truth (ἀλήθειαν), why do you not believe me?" Several words commonly connected to *parrēsia* are here clustered together: *hamartia*, *elenchein* and *alētheia*. In a context where Jesus' own bold speech is designed to expose the sins of his opponents, he seems here to be challenging their right to rebuke him. He can display *parrēsia* to expose sins. They cannot. Furthermore, the term *elenchein* does not define only the work of Jesus' opponents. Jesus describes his own ministry with the same two words (*elenchein* and *alētheia*), when he says (3:20–21),

> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed (ἐλεγχθῇ). But those who do what is true (τὴν ἀλήθειαν) come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

One hesitates to make too fine a point out of all of this, because none of these words is used in direct relation to *parrēsia* in John. And yet, Jesus' ministry before Israel is characterized as a ministry of frank speech, *parrēsia* (18:20) where he and his opponents attempt to expose (*elenchein*) one another's sins, while ancient discussions of *parrēsia* also see frank speech as a tool for exposing sins (*hamartiai*). It seems at least compelling that *elenchein* and *alētheia* are also involved in this activity and are part of the same mechanism. It should be noted as well that Jesus does not expose the sins of his opponents in order to crush or destroy them. He exposes their sins in order to free them from their sins. John 8:23–24 makes this plain when Jesus says,

> You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.

He does not consign them to sin with no chance of escape, but urges them to rise from their sin by believing in him. The philosophers and orator insist that frank speech must always benefit its hearer. Jesus' frank speech does precisely that.

V. *Parrēsia* and Personal Peril

Another side of this story needs now to be told. The preceding paragraphs have focused on the activity of Jesus, and especially on the parallels between his boldness and the boldness of ancient philosophers and orators. We now turn our attention away from Jesus, and toward his audience. It is one thing to notice how Jesus and the other deliverers of frank speech behave; it is quite another to see how their audiences respond. *Parrēsia* is strong medicine. It does not please its hearers.[21] Philodemus says that those who forget the value of *parrēsia* will react with anger and resentment when treated boldly (XXIa). Dio Chrysostom (*Or. 51*, 4) says that "those who admonish … are hated by most men …" Detailing the dangers that accompany frank speech is our next concern, and to facilitate this effort we will compare what we find in John to a text from Lucian. The goal of such comparison is not, of course, to argue in favor of any theories of direct influence or to suggest any relationship at all between the texts compared. The goal is simply to show roughly contemporary comparative examples that might shed clearer light on the logic of the Johannine material.

In Lucian's *The Dead Come to Life, or The Fisherman* the character Parrēsiathēs ("Frank Speech") challenges the philosophers of his own day in ways that resemble the frank speech of Jesus. In the following discussion, four points of contact will be explored between these two texts. Again, the purpose of tracing connections is not to show any influence or relationship binding the texts, but rather to illuminate John by comparison to contemporary material.

The first point of contact between the texts centers on the violence that is meted out against the purveyors of frank speech. Jesus and Parrēsiathēs are not similar only in how they talk to their audiences. They are also similar in the hostile responses they elicit. Parrēsiathēs says of himself (20), "You see, in fact, how many have come to dislike me and how I am imperiled." The peril of which he speaks is evident from the first line in the

[21] For this reason, Philo speaks of the dangers of bold speech, and the wisdom of Abraham, in the following passage (Philo, *Somn.* 2.83): "Do not these men then talk foolishly, are they not mad, who desire to display their inexperience and freedom of speech to kings and tyrants, at times daring to speak and to do things in opposition to their will? Do they not perceive that they have not only put their necks under the yoke like brute beasts, but that they have also surrendered and betrayed their whole bodies and souls likewise, and their wives and their children, and their parents, and all the rest of the numerous kindred and community of their other relations? And is it not lawful for the charioteer, and also for the passenger, with all freedom to spur, and to urge forward, and to check, and to hold back, according as he desires to arrange things, so as to make them greater or smaller" (trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, *Philo: In Ten Volumes*, Vol. 5 [LCL 275; Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann, 1968]).

book, which opens with Socrates encouraging the other philosophers to attack Parrēsiathēs as follows:

> Pelt, pelt (βάλλε, βάλλε) the scoundrel with plenty of stones (λίθοις)! Heap him with clods! Pile him up with broken dishes, too! Beat the blackguard with your sticks! Look out he doesn't get away! … Let us invent a complex death for him, such as to satisfy us all; in fact he deserves to die seven times over for each of us.[22]

Jesus meets the same angry response. As early as 5:18, we hear that Jesus' opponents want to kill him for blasphemy, and we hear the refrain repeatedly. Throughout John 7 to 11, Jesus speaks (7:26; 10:24; 11:14; cf. 18:20) and walks (11:54) among the people of Israel in a bold posture of *parrēsia*. The response of his opponents is hostile. They even try to stone him in John 8:59, where we read, "They picked up stones (λίθους) to throw (βάλωσιν) at him, but Jesus hid himself and departed from the Temple." Both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs encounter violence as a result of bold speech.

Second, legal prosecution follows violence. In spite of the violent beginning of his story, Parrēsiathēs is able to convince his attackers not to stone him, but rather to put him on trial. He says to them (8),

> However that may be, my masters, do not put me to death unsentenced and unheard. This too was once a trait of yours, not to deal with fellow citizens on a basis of force and superior strength, but to settle your differences by course of law, according to a hearing, and in your turn receiving one. So let us choose a judge, and then you may bring your complaint either jointly or through anyone whom you may elect to represent you all; and I will defend myself against your charges.

The sentiment here expressed has an obvious Johannine counterpart, when Nicodemus checks the hasty conclusions of the Pharisees in the following exchange (7:47–51):

> Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law – they are accursed." Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?"

Both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs are eventually brought before a judge. Jesus appears before both the High Priest and Pontius Pilate, while Parrēsiathēs is put on trial in front of the personification of Philosophy.

Not only their trials, but also their defenses are similar. This is the third connection. When defending himself at trial, Parrēsiathēs explains that he is not opposed to the grand old masters of philosophy, but only their modern heirs. These modern philosophers actually contradict the teaching of their founders. They are charlatans and so Socrates and Plato and Aristotle

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[22] Translations of Lucian in what follows are from A. M. Harmon (*Lucian: In Eight Volumes* [LCL 14, 54, 130, 162, 302, 430–432; London: Heinemann, 1913–67]).

are wrong to think that Parrēsiathēs is attacking them when he attacks philosophers. He is attacking false philosophers, in defense of the true. He says in his defense (31, 32, 33),

> When I saw, however, that many were not in love with Philosophy, but simply coveted the reputation of the thing, and that although in all the obvious commonplace matters which anyone can easily copy they were very like worthy men (in beard, I mean, and walk and garb), in their life and actions, however, they contradicted their outward appearance and reversed your practice and sullied the dignity of the profession, I became angry. … When I saw you so treated by these others, I could not brook the shame of their impersonation (ὑπόκρίσεως) when they made bold, though but apes, to wear heroic masks, or to copy the ass of Cumae who put on a lion's skin and claimed to be himself a lion, … I could not endure this spectacle, but set about exposing them and distinguishing them from you.

As soon as he finishes his speech of defense, the ancient philosophers all agree that he is on their side, and from that point forward, they ally with him in his struggle against modern philosophers, exposing these moderns as charlatans. The mechanism underlying this circumstance is similar to the work of Jesus in John. Parrēsiathēs is caught up in a struggle with his contemporaries over determining the proper heir to the ancient luminaries. His contemporaries accuse him of defaming the ancients. In reality, the ancients are his allies against his contemporaries. The same is true of Jesus. His opponents insist that he is contradicting the Scriptures, Moses and Abraham, but Jesus enlists all of these allies. The following excerpts make the matter plain, and seem similar to the critique of Parrēsiathēs above.

> You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. … Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say? (5:39–40, 45–47).
>
> They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did." (8:39–40)

The efforts of Jesus and of Parrēsiathēs share the common quality, then, of urging contemporary figures to seek out the true manifestation of an ancient message. When they are put on trial, both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs insist that they do not oppose the ancient teachers, but rather they oppose the charlatans who wrongly represent the ancients. Far from attacking ancient teachers, they are closely allied with them and together prosecute the modern figures. Moses joins Jesus as a prosecutor, just as Socrates and his compatriots join Parrēsiathēs.

Fourth, and finally, the trials of both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs involve a legal reversal, a dramatic *peripeteia*. The reversal in the case of Parrēsiathēs is straightforward. After he is acquitted by the ancient philosophers in

their trial of him before Dame Philosophy, a new trial begins. Only now, Parrēsiathēs is not the defendant, but the prosecutor. The personification of Virtue marks the point of transition when she announces after Parrēsiathēs is acquitted (39), "Well, then, let us now initiate our second bowl of wine. Let us summon up those others to be punished for the insults they are inflicting upon us. Frankness shall accuse each of them." What follows is a new trial, this time with Frankness as the prosecutor.

In the case of Jesus, legal reversal has regularly been discussed.[23] It is impossible here to discuss the matter in full detail, but a full discussion is not necessary. It is enough to list a few key moments. In chapters 7 and 8, for example, Jesus is being questioned by his opponents in a discussion that includes legal terms like "witness" (*martyria*), "judgment" (*krisis*), "investigation" (*elenchus*), and others. But the function of these terms, and more important, the way in which they define Jesus, changes throughout the chapters. In chapter 7 and in 8:12–20 one view of judging prevails. Verses 8:21–58 present another view, and this change indicates an important shift in the roles of the various actors in the forensic drama of these chapters.[24] In both chapter 7, and in 8:12–20, Jesus' primary activity is that of witness. He has made a legal claim, and his opponents are questioning the legal basis of his claim, as well as his testimony. Jesus insists that he does not judge (8:15), and other people are regularly cast in the role of judge (7:24, 51; 8:15). In the latter part of chapter 8, however, Jesus plays the role of judge in concert with the Father. "Yet even if I do judge," he announces, "My judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge (κρίνω), but I and the Father who sent me" (8:16). He then adds again at 8:26: "I have much to say about you and much to condemn (κρίνειν); but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." The Tabernacles Discourse in John 7–8 begins, therefore, by showing Jesus being judged, but it ends with him being the judge. The same reversal takes place in John 9. The chapter opens by identifying the blind man as a sinner, and the label of sinner is applied many times thereafter to both Jesus (9:16, 25, 31–33) and the blind man (9:2, 34).[25] The chapter closes, however, with an unexpected pronouncement. First, Jesus identifies himself, not as the defendant, but as the judge. "I came into this world" he says, "for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind" (9:39). If the apparent defendant and sinner is

[23] For the legal character of John, see A. T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000) and G. L. Parsenios, *Rhetoric and Drama in the Johannine Lawsuit Motif* (WUNT 258; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[24] The following analysis of judgment in John 7–8 relies on J. Neyrey, *Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 139–67.

[25] For sin and reversal in John 9, see D. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 42–48.

really the judge, then the apparent judges are the sinners. Jesus tells the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains" (9:41). In the same way, the trial before Pilate has been construed not so much as a trial of Jesus by Pilate, but a trial of Pilate by Jesus. The apparent defendant is really the judge. In the case of both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs, therefore, the person who engages in frank speech may begin his career as a defendant, but he is eventually not only acquitted of all wrong, but becomes the judge.

Two things have been accomplished by attending so closely to the foregoing connections between Jesus in John and Parrēsiathēs in the work of Lucian. The first is to show how much violence and persecution are visited upon a person who engages in *parrēsia*. Although they are ultimately vindicated, both Jesus and Parrēsiathēs are first persecuted and then prosecuted. The second matter is even more critical. *Parrēsia* is a touchstone that reveals what is true beneath a false veneer. Parrēsiathēs is hated by contemporary philosophers because he finds that they profess one mode of life, but actually live another. He even refers to this as their hypocrisy (32) and compares them not only to mere actors, but actors wholly unfit for their parts, like weak and feeble men playing the role of Achilles (31–33). *Parrēsia* has the same function in Plato's *Gorgias* (487a). When Socrates and Callicles discuss the best way to discern whether a person is really good or bad, Socrates wonders what device could test his own soul, to see whether it is of true gold or false (486d–e). He says, "For I conceive that whoever would sufficiently test a soul as to rectitude of life or the reverse should go to work with three things which are all in your possession – knowledge, goodwill, and frankness."

The frankness of Jesus is also designed to distinguish the true from the false, both in himself and in others. He urges his opponents, "Do not judge by appearances (ὄψιν), but judge justly" (John 7:24). Later, Jesus will add (8:15), "You judge by human standards (κατὰ τὴν σάρκα); I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true (ἀληθινή) for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me." Proper judgment distinguishes between appearance (ὄψις) and reality/truth (ἀλήθεια).[26] To judge Jesus wrongly is to see wrongly, but to judge him rightly is to see the truth, the real. In this way again, boldness and truth are intimately bound.

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[26] For the translation of ἀλήθεια as "real," see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:499–500 (n. 10). For connections between this notion of ἀλήθεια and Middle Platonism, see C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 139, 170–78 and R. Hirsch-Luipold, "Klartext in Bildern: ἀληθινός κτλ., παροιμία – παρρησία, σημεῖον als Signalwörter für eine bildhafte Darstellungsform im Johannesevangelium," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (ed. J. Frey et al.; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006), 61–102, esp. 68–74.

In a host of very real and important ways, of course, the work of Lucian and the Gospel of John are utterly – and obviously – different. Lucian is concerned with showing the hypocrisy of contemporary philosophers, while the Gospel of John is written to engender belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (20:31). But if these overarching purposes are radically different, a striking similarity is also present. Both texts connect *parrēsia* to a much larger cluster of themes, and to the same themes and in very similar ways. What connects all of these themes is the danger that attaches to speaking boldly. To force people to see the difference between the false and the true will lead to hatred, persecution and even prosecution. One is reminded of the comments of Socrates at the close of the Allegory of the Cave (Plato, *Resp.* 7.514a–517a). Living in a cave is living what is unreal, but people are willing to live in this way because the cave is comfortable. A teacher or guide must force those in the cave to rise and to face the truth. But this guide person runs a risk of becoming hated. When Socrates closes the allegory, he wonders about the fate of this guide. He asks, "And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them and lead them up, would they not kill him?" The interlocutor responds, "They certainly would" (517a). The allegory rightly refers to the fate of Socrates himself, who was killed after a lifetime of bold truth-telling.

VI. The Silence of Jesus before His Accusers

The boldness of Jesus leads to this very same result. They kill him. The content of the truth he reveals is different, of course, from that of Socrates, but the result of speaking boldly in pursuit of the truth is the same. Both Jesus and Socrates are put on trial and sentenced to death. But this similarity in fate highlights a very important difference, and it is to this difference that our attention can now turn. Socrates defends himself openly and boldly when he responds to his accusers. He offers a full defense over dozens of pages of text in Plato's *Apology*. The boldness of his public life continues at his trial. Jesus seems different. In one part of this trial, he actively chooses silence, when we read (19:8–9), "Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer."[27]

What is one to make of this? When read in isolation, this verse seems to distinguish the silence of Jesus from the bold defense of Socrates. In chap-

[27] This question arose in the course of the discussion when these papers were presented on Patmos, so the final form of this paper responds to the issue raised by the conference participants.

ter 7, Jesus' brothers suggested that Jesus was too fearful to speak boldly before the world. Does his silence here before Pilate indicate that they might have been correct?

Four factors militate against such a reading. First, speaking boldly requires discernment. While the Cynics would often employ bold speaking indiscriminately and to every person in every case, other teachers insisted that boldness needed to be meted out carefully and at the right time.[28] Plutarch lists several circumstances where bold speech is not appropriate in his *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*. Since the goal of speaking boldly is the improvement of the listener, one should be careful to employ bold speaking only in the time and place that will improve, and not embarrass or discourage, the recipient of the instruction. For example, one should never upbraid another person at a party (*Mor.* 68C–D) or after someone has suffered some painful setback (*Mor.* 68E–69E). In these circumstances, frank speech would be unseasonable, causing more harm than good. Seneca offers a further perspective that is even more appropriate for the case of Jesus before Pilate. When discussing the failure of his friend Marcellinus to live a more philosophical and disciplined life, he writes (*Ep.* 29:1–3),

> He seldom comes to see me, for no other reason than that he is afraid to hear the truth, and at present he is removed from my danger of hearing it; for one must not talk to a man unless he is willing to listen.[29]

Marcellinus is "afraid to hear the truth," so speaking boldly to a person like this is simply a waste of time. In the biblical tradition, Proverbs 26:4–5 shows the same need for discernment. Prov 26:5 may say, "Answer fools according to their folly, or they may be wise in their own eyes," but 26:4 says, "Do not answer fools according to their folly, or you will be a fool yourself." This latter line from Proverbs and the advice from Seneca suggest that speaking boldly to someone unwilling to hear the truth is to lower oneself to that person's level. Sometimes, one must rebuke and correct, but sometimes one must be silent before fools. Eccl 3:7, likewise, refers to a time to speak and a time to be silent. Like Marcellinus before Seneca, Pilate is unable to hear the truth, even as the truth stands in his very presence (John 18:38). Bold speech becomes silence in such a circumstance.

Second, the refusal to respond to Pilate at 19:8–9 is a rare moment of silence in Jesus' defense of himself before both the High Priest as well as Pilate. The Synoptic portrayals of Jesus mention his silence before the

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[28] The matter is discussed in A. J. Malherbe, "'In Season and out of Season': 2 Timothy 4:2," in idem, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 137–46 (n. 11). See above, n. 8, for a discussion of "unseasonable boldness."

[29] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Epistles* (trans. R. M. Gummere; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917).

Sanhedrin and Herod (Mark 14:61; Matt 26:63; Luke 23:9), and the only response he gives to Pilate is in answer to the question of whether he is king. This silence is often connected to the Suffering Servant saying in Isa 53:7, "Just as a sheep is mute before its shearers, he did not open his mouth." This verse very reasonably lies behind Jesus' silence at John 19:8–9, as well as his general silence in the Synoptic trials. But it would be wrong to see Jesus as totally silent before his judges in John. He speaks very much. In the Synoptic portrayals, he is mostly silent, and his one response to the question of his kingship is the exception. In John by contrast, the exception is actually his silence. He speaks a great deal to Pilate. In every other case, he responds when questioned. His silence, therefore, should not be overemphasized.

Third, far from distinguishing Jesus from Socrates, the response of Jesus to the High Priest in John 18 sounds very much like Socrates, as Brown recognizes in the following exchange (18:19–21):

> Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly (παρρησίᾳ) to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said."

Socrates makes the same defense at the opening of his *Apology* when he emphasizes that he has never said anything in private that would contradict his teaching in the open. He says,

> If anyone says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private that all others could not have heard, then know that he does not speak the truth. (*Apol.* 33b)

Fourth, and finally, a dominant leitmotif of Socrates' *Apology* is his defense of the truth.[30] Socrates contrasts his speech to that of his accusers, for example, by saying, "Now they, as I say, have said little or nothing true; but you shall hear from me nothing but the truth" (17b). The same concern for what is true comes through in Jesus' brief exchange with Pilate at 18:37–38:

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[30] R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2:826 (n. 10), makes the connection between the words of Jesus and Socrates in this regard. A. W. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 114–15, writes, "Socrates begins his Apology affirming the power of speech to cover and uncover, to hide or reveal the truth. Socrates' accusers have with their speeches hidden rather than uncovered the truth; Socrates' task is to pull away the curtains that have concealed the truth. The recurrent language of the introductory passages of the Apology (and, indeed, of much that follows) is that of truth … In order to be just, the jurors must hear the unembellished truth from the man accused. Justice in this sense requires the unveiling practice of parrhesia, since only through the practice of parrhesia can the truth be uncovered."

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

In the case of both Jesus and Socrates, bold speaking is not important in and of itself, but only as a tool that chisels away false in order to expose and explore the truth. In each case, truth is on trial.[31] Thus, a comparison of Jesus and Socrates on the question of bold speaking yields more similarity than difference. And the boldness of Jesus meets the same fate as bold speech often meets: violence. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to explore the political manifestation of boldness in Athens with any thoroughness, but two things might be said here in regard to the suppression of bold speech. The Athenian democracy was supposedly a place where boldness flourished, and frank speech was one of the key ingredients of democratic life. In the *Republic* (557b) Socrates says that democratic Athens is "full of freedom and of freedom of speech (παρρησίας)."[32] A bit later in the *Republic*, by contrast, tyrants are said to banish frank speech (567c). But democracies were not always hospitable to bold speech. There was a limit to the democratic tolerance of bold speech. The case of Socrates proves this. A few decades later, Demosthenes recognizes the same danger inherent in bold speech, when he says in his *First Philippic*,

I have spoken my plain sentiments with *parrēsia*. Yet, certain as I am that it is to your interest to receive the best advice, I could have wished that I were equally certain that to offer such advice is also to the interest of the speaker … But, as it is, in the uncertainty of what the result of my proposal may be for myself, yet in the conviction that it will be to your interest to adopt it, I have ventured to address you.[33]

These comments on the dangers of bold speech bring the argument full circle and return us to where we began many pages ago, with the opening lines of John 7 and the relationship between silence and bold speech, and especially the dangers inherent in bold speech which the cowardly would avoid through silence. The last several pages have recognized the character of Jesus' bold speech, and especially the bold speech which he directed toward the broader public and especially his opponents. But there is another audience for the bold speech of Jesus, and to that audience we can turn now.

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[31] An obvious allusion to the book of Lincoln, *Truth on Trial* (n. 23).

[32] Plato, *Republic*, in *Complete Works* (ed. J. Cooper; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). Cf. Landauer, "*Parrhesia* and the Demos Tyrannos," 186 (n. 2).

[33] Demosthenes, *Or. 4*, 51, quoted in Landauer, "*Parrhesia* and the Demos Tyrannos," 192 (n. 2).

VII. Boldness among Friends: *Parrēsia* and *Philia*

If philosophers discuss the exercise of frank speech in the presence of "all people" in general, and even among enemies, they devote even more attention to the place of *parrēsia* among friends (φίλοι). The context of friendship is the second social setting for bold speech described in the comments of Isocrates and Philodemus with which this paper began. Frank speech and friendship are natural and constant companions. Plutarch says of frank speech that it is a "most potent medicine in friendship (φιλία)."[34] According to Philo, frank speech is "akin to friendship" (*Her.* 19,21) and Plutarch calls it "the language of friendship" (*Adul. am* 36 [*Mor.* 74D]). The Epicurean Philodemus writes, "A wise man will employ frankness (παρρησία) toward his friends (φίλους),"[35] where the "friends" are one's fellow followers of the teachings of Epicurus. Frankness is such a valued part of friendship, because friends want nothing but the best for each other. Friends do not hide the truth from one another, since to do so would lead to the corruption of a beloved companion. Friendship, in other words, does not lead one to avoid telling harsh truths. Friendship compels one to do so – with *parrēsia*.

As Jesus draws his Farewell Discourses to a close, he speaks boldly in the community of his disciples, whom he has already called his friends (φίλοι, 15:13, 14). He now refers again to the φιλία that he shares with his disciples, and places this relationship in the context of frank speech as follows (16:25),

> I have said these things to you in figures of speech (παροιμίαις). The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures (παροιμίαις), but will tell you plainly (παρρησίᾳ) of the Father. On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves (φιλεῖ) you, because you have loved me (πεφιλήκατε) and have believed that I came from God.

The disciples respond by using the same alternation between speaking boldly and speaking in figures. They say,

> Yes, now you are speaking plainly (παρρησίᾳ), not in any figure of speech (παροιμίαν)! Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!

Two matters related to philosophical discussions of bold speech deserve attention here. The first is a bit more speculative. It is the opposition

[34] Plutarch, *Adul. am.* 36 (*Mor.* 74D).
[35] Philodemus, *Lib.*, frg. 15 (n. 1).

between speaking in figures (παροιμίαις) and speaking boldly (παρρησίᾳ). Speaking in veiled or figural words is often seen as opposed to speaking with boldness, because figured speech is obscure speech, while frank speech is intended to be as clear and unadulterated as possible. To speak with irony (τὸ εἰρωνεύεσθαι) or in figures (σχηματίζειν) is the opposite of speaking "simply" (ἁπλοῦς) and directly.[36]

The second issue is more central to the present discussion, and has to do with what Jesus says as soon as his disciples say that they believe in him. He shatters their confidence by boldly and frankly predicting the pain and suffering that is about to befall them. They will scatter and be hated by the world (16:32). This is bold speech among friends. Jesus has hidden nothing from his friends, but tells them openly what dangers await them. The opposite of such bold speech, of course, is flattery, not only in important texts like Plutarch's *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*, and Philodemus' *On Frank Criticism*, but among the ancient philosophers in general. St John Chrysostom insists that Jesus' prediction of suffering here demonstrates precisely that Jesus is not a flatterer. Interpreting this verse, Chrysostom speaks in the voice of Jesus as follows,

> For, you will not be able to say that to flatter you I said only those things that would win your favor, or that my words were those of a deceiver. Indeed, if anyone were going to deceive you, he would not make predictions of this kind to you, since they are apt to influence you to change your purpose.[37]

And yet, Jesus does not leave the disciples lost in a sea of anxiety and suffering. He reminds them that suffering is not the end of their story when he announces, "In this world you have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world" (16:33). He has spoken to them boldly about their difficult future, and yet now softens the message with a statement of encouragement. A long quotation from Plutarch will show how closely this procedure embodies the bold speech of the philosophers. Plutarch, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* (*Mor.* 74D), writes,

> Since, then, as has been said, frankness, from its very nature, is oftentimes painful to the person to whom it is applied, there is need to follow the example of the physicians; for they, in surgical operation, do not leave the part that has been operated upon in its suffering and pain, but treat it with soothing lotions and fomentations; nor do persons that use admonition with skill simply apply its bitterness and sting, and then run away; but by further converse and gentle words they mollify and assuage, even as stonecutters smooth and polish the portions of statues that have been previously hammered.

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[36] See extensive discussion in Fredrickson, "ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ in the Pauline Epistles," 173–75 (n. 1).

[37] *Hom. Jo.* 11:3 (PG 59:417–18), translation from Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, trans., *John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist*, vol. 1 (FC 33; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 332.

No less than when he speaks boldly before the world, when Jesus speaks boldly before his friends, he does so in a way that manifests the themes and procedures that the philosophers define and prescribe.

VIII. Conclusion

The bold speech of Jesus in the Gospel of John resembles the bold speech of the philosophers in a variety of ways, sometimes to a greater degree and sometimes to a lesser, especially where certain key words and clusters of ideas are combined in John as they are in the philosophers. Just as it is in ancient discussions generally, the particular bold speech of Jesus is connected to truth (*alētheia*), investigation (*elenchus*) and the exposure of sins, especially in the separation of false appearances from reality and in the distinction between friendly concern and fawning flattery. In spite of the typical conventions among translators, the term *parrēsia* in John is not a mundane, non-technical word that means merely "publicly" or "openly" or "clearly." *Parrēsia* means in John what it means in the philosophers: boldness. And *parrēsia* defines the way in which Jesus speaks to all his interlocutors, whether they are foes who pursue him with angry accusations, or disciples who pursue him as devoted friends.

"Light" (φῶς)

The Philosophical Content of the Term and the Gospel of John

Marianne Meye Thompson

From the beginning of the Gospel of John "light" serves as an important image in the portrayal of reality and of the figure of Jesus and the benefits that he bestows. Like other ancient authors, John exploits the common characteristics of light in developing this multifaceted image and its associations with sight and illumination. And while John's light imagery is most frequently – and profitably – interpreted against the backdrop of the Old Testament and Judaism, light is also an important image in ancient Greek poets and philosophers.[1] In such sources one finds numerous examples of both the literal and figurative meanings of light: light refers to physical phenomena, including daylight, sunlight, dawn, and the light of heavenly bodies; it designates the qualities of light, such as brightness and shining; and it may also designate that which shines, such as a lamp.[2] Light always carries a positive connotation, symbolizing among other things deliverance; freedom; joy; hope; truth; and the reward of the pious.[3] In darkness, people yearn for light, while the unceasing rhythm of day and night, light and darkness, provides harmony and pleasure to human life.[4] Light

[1] Virtually every commentary and many monographs offer a discussion of light or the contrast between light and darkness in the Old Testament and Jewish sources; some venture into the realms of "Hellenistic mysticism"; fewer explore the possible connections to ancient philosophical texts; O. Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis: Ein metaphorisches Paradigma in den johanneischen Schriften* (Freiburg etc.: Herder, 1995), includes a few comments and bibliography. See especially Conzelmann, "φῶς," *TDNT* 9:312–15.

[2] For references, see Conzelmann, *TDNT* 9:312–13 (n. 1). See further φάος in LSJ.

[3] Deliverance: Homer, *Il.* 6.6; 17.615; freedom: Aeschylus, *Cho.* 810; joy: Aeschylus, *Pers.* 300; hope: Sophocles, *Ant.* 599; truth: Euripides, *Iph. taur.* 1026; reward of piety: Aristophanes, *Ran.* 456.

[4] Dio Chrysostom, *Or. 3*, 81; Aeschylus, *Pers.* 300 ("bright day follows night wrapped in gloom"). Because people welcome (ἱμείρουσιν) the day that comes out of darkness they call it ἱμέρα (Plato, *Crat.* 418c–d); faced with the prospect of descent into darkness, Iphigenia laments "it is sweet to look upon the light" (Euripides, *Iph. aul.* 1218).

designates that which is public, open, or known.[5] Light becomes a figure of gaining knowledge. Finally, light represents the good itself, wisdom, truth, and ultimately the divine.[6]

In this paper, I will briefly present two patterns, the first cosmological and the second epistemological, in which light plays a role in ancient philosophical sources. In the first, light is a phenomenon intrinsic to the physical world, one half of a pair of the "contraries" that underlie the cosmos; its counterpart is darkness. The contrast between light and darkness is of course found throughout the Gospel of John, although there are clearly important differences between it and ancient philosophical sources. In the second pattern, the connection of light and vision is developed: light grants illumination, enabling people to grasp or see reality. The connection between sight and light in John figures especially in the healing of the blind man. The brief explorations of these two patterns will allow an initial comparison with the Gospel of John, suggesting how the Gospel's use of light and darkness could have been heard by those acquainted primarily with philosophical rather than biblical imagery.

I. Light in Ancient Philosophical Sources: Two Patterns

Ancient Greek philosophy organized the world by "dualities" or "pairs of opposites."[7] Appealing to such polarities, Heraclitus, for example, defined God as "day-night, winter-summer, war-peace, fullness-famine."[8] In a

[5] Plato notes that justice cannot be done and honor cannot be bestowed where people conceal their ways in darkness from one another (*Leg.* 738e); but women do not wish to be brought "into the light" in public functions (*Leg.* 781c; cf. 724a); Sophocles, *Phil.* 1353; Plutarch, *Lat. viv.* 2 (*Mor.* 1130a–b).

[6] Diogenes Laertius 8.68, recounts how when Empedocles "beheld a light in the heavens and a glitter of lamps" he became a god.

[7] These "opposites" have been called "the key to early Greek philosophy"; G. Nebel, *Griechischer Ursprung* (Wuppertal: Marées, 1948), 168, cited in Schwankl, *Licht und Finsternis*, 63 (n. 1). See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1966), for a fuller discussion and history of "polarity" in ancient Greek philosophy. For a fascinating discussion of these ancient antinomies with particular reference to Paul, see J. L. Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies," in idem, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 111–23.

[8] Heraclitus, frg. 67. English translation in K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948); fragment numbers correspond to the 5th edition of DK. Empedocles describes a "revolving cycle" of strife ordered by Love and rent asunder by Hate (Empedocles, frg. 26); Anaxagoras comments that "all things" were present in the Whole (including hot/cold; moist/dry; bright and dark; Anaxagoras, frg. 4).

poem to his pupil, Zeno, Parmenides describes the world as divided into the flaming fire of the heavens called Light and the dense and heavy body of Night. Light and Night are equal; they comprise one of the dualities of the cosmos (others include right/left, male/female). Light is not only that which is seen; it is also that which one sees by. Thus, Parmenides also describes "the way of truth" (as opposed to the "way of seeming") as a way to light, which he equates with "being" or the "what is."[9]

According to Aristotle, Alcmaeon first proposed the theory that "human things go in pairs";[10] but it was the Pythagoreans who developed a list of ten such oppositional pairs or dualities, including male/female, right/left, odd/even, and light and darkness.[11] All things, writes Aristotle, are "either opposites or are derived from opposites."[12] These "contraries" (τἀναντία) are the "first principles of what exists" (ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων), the phenomena that lie "at the foundation of the cosmos."[13] But in his discussion, "light" and its counterpart darkness do not feature any more prominently than any of the other pairs. Indeed the "first principles of the contraries are unity and plurality," another polarity that pervades ancient philosophy.[14]

In these polarities, light is inevitably positive and darkness negative. From Homer on, light is linked with life and darkness with death; to die is to be swallowed up by darkness.[15] Thus in Aristotle's presentation of the Pythagorean Table of Opposites, an apparently superior value is assigned to certain parts of each pair: unity, right, male, light are in the column with good, whereas their opposites are associated with evil, although not clearly or necessarily deemed evil in and of themselves. But the seeds of dualism lie in these dualities, particularly when their positive or negative values are emphasized or developed. Later, for example, Plutarch reports the view that the "great majority and the wisest" of persons believe there are two

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[9] Parmenides, frg. 1.

[10] Alcmaeon of Croton, frg. 4.

[11] *Metaph.* 986a. Aristotle notes that others "speculated along the same lines." For further exemplars, see Lloyd, *Polarity*, 16 (n. 7). Philo adapted these dualities in his explication of creation (*Her.* 134–135, 146, 207). For the thought in Jewish texts, see Sir 33:15: "All the works of the Most High are in pairs, one the opposite of the other" (πάντα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ὑψίστου δύο ἓν κατέναντι τοῦ ἑνός).

[12] *Metaph.* 1005a (πάντα γὰρ ἢ ἐναντία ἢ ἐξ ἐναντίων).

[13] *Metaph.* 986b. Aristotle acknowledged pairs that had intermediate states (black, white, gray).

[14] *Metaph.* 1005a; *De an.* 418b.

[15] There are numerous references associating life with light and death with darkness: At death "darkness enfolded [one's] eyes" (Homer, *Il.* 4.461; 5.47, "Hateful darkness got hold of him"; so also 13.672; 18.61; *Od.* 4.540; and see Euripides, *Alc.* 266, "Hades is near and night creeps darkly over my eyes … Farewell, my children, joy be yours as you look on the light of the sun!" [266–272]). For additional references see Conzelmann, *TDNT* 9:313 (n. 1).

gods, rivals to each other: one fashioned good, the other fashioned evil.[16] Plutarch compares these two deities to light and darkness or ignorance. In such a schema, light and darkness are not simply phenomena of the universe, but rival powers located either in different deities or descriptions of the faculties of knowing.

This leads us to consider the second pattern of ancient philosophy: light as that which enables one to see, an analogy that plays a larger role in the ancient sources and has greater potential to be of interest for reading the Gospel of John. Perhaps the most familiar of the ancient analogies here is Plato's Analogy of the Cave.[17] The story is well known. People are chained in a cave, with their backs to its opening and hence to the light. There is a fire between them and the opening; on the wall in front of them they see various images of puppets and other images carried along in front of them. All they see of each other are shadows on the wall. This, then, is what they assume reality to be: shadows cast by puppets, images, and each other. But then they are released, able to see the light, and learn that all they have seen were shadows of images. Now they must be gradually habituated to see the dazzling light of the sun and all that the sun, that "sheds light on all," allows them to see more truly (*Resp.* 540a). If they subsequently return to the realm of darkness to inform others that they have been deceived in thinking that they are seeing reality, those still in the cave would doubt their credibility and even try to kill them.

In the Analogy of the Cave, the contrast between light and darkness is the contrast between the higher world of forms and their copies in the lower world. Light both represents the Good itself and the means by which one knows the good: even as the sun "sheds light on all" so turning from seeing only the shadows on the wall to seeing the light of the sun is to turn from seeing the material realities to grasping their Forms with one's mind. The imagery of light has both to do with *what* is seen and *how* one sees it. In some ways it is incidental to this analogy that "light" is the object of seeing, for what is to be comprehended is not so much light itself, but truth, beauty, goodness, and so on. But because "light" and "sight" are linked on the physical level, they become metaphors for grasping that which is ultimate or true: one "sees" the sun; one "sees" the light; one grasps the suprasensual reality of the Forms, and one does so by the Form itself.

The dual characteristic of light as that which one sees and that which enables one to see was commonly observed. Thus Aristotle asserted that "the object of sight is the visible" and that "without light it is impossible to see." In discussing what one sees, Aristotle commented that what is visible in light is color; without light, color is invisible; "light makes potential

[16] He refers specifically to Zoroaster; *Is. Os.* (*Mor.* 369D–F).
[17] *Resp.* 7.514a–517b.

into actual colors."[18] In that sense, light can be compared to the mind (νοῦς): the mind is that which illumines a thing and makes it possible to see at all.[19] Similarly, musing on the relationship of light, sight, and color, Epictetus observed that God could have made color, or objects that could not be seen with the faculty of vision, but if he had not made light, then nothing could be seen at all.[20] There are visible objects; there is the faculty of sight: but without light, it is impossible to see. On that score, Heraclitus' oft-quoted dictum, "Eyes are surer witnesses than ears" would need to be modified: eyes are surer witnesses than ears, but only if light illumines the eyes.[21]

The Jewish exegete Philo approved Heraclitus' pronouncement that "eyes are surer testimonies than ears."[22] On that basis, Philo contrasted Ishmael and Israel in terms of seeing God, to the detriment of the former:

> "Ishmael" means "hearkening to God." Hearing takes the second place, yielding the first to sight, and sight is the portion of Israel, the son free-born and first-born; for "seeing God" is the translation of "Israel." It is possible to hear the false and take it for true, because hearing is deceptive, but sight, by which we discern what really is, is devoid of falseness. (*Fug.* 208)

Philo's confidence in sight may be overly optimistic here, but when he speaks of seeing God, he certainly does not mean seeing God as God is (ὁ ὤν or τὸ ὄν), nor does he mean seeing God with the eyes. To be sure, the Scriptures speak of God as light: "The Lord is my light and my savior" (Ps 27:1). This means that God is the first light (*Somn.* 1.75), or the archetype of light pouring forth countless rays (*Cher.* 97; *Fug.* 136; *Spec.* 1.42; *Migr.* 40).[23] God's light – God's radiance, God's being – cannot be comprehended by the senses; it is intelligible only to the mind (*Cher.* 97). The light perceptible by the senses is the created light. It follows that if anyone rightly claims to have seen the uncreated God, they have not done so with the

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[18] *De an.* 418a–419a, 429a, 430a.

[19] Conzelmann, *TDNT* 9:315 (n. 1).

[20] *Diss.* 1.6.6.

[21] Cited in DK 22 B, frg. 101a; English translation given as "The eyes are more exact witnesses than ears" in Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 131 (n. 1). To be sure, Heraclitus also claims, "Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for human beings having barbarian souls," cited in DK 22 B, frg. 107. For the preference for sight over hearing, see also Polybius 12.27.1; cf. 4.2.1–2; Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.8); Thucydides (1.73.2); Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 29; Dio Chrysostom (*Or. 12*, 71); and Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.55; *B. J.* 1.1, 3, 22.

[22] *Ebr.* 82; cf. *Conf.* 57, 148; *Abr.* 57, 61.

[23] C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 203, notes that Philo hesitates to say, "God is light." Dodd thinks φῶς ἀληθινόν is the Johannine equivalent of the Philonic φῶς ἀρχέτυπος ("archetypal light").

external senses, but by means of the mind (*Mut.* 6; *Somn.* 1.72). Paradoxically, then, Philo speaks of the "most brilliant and radiant light of the invisible and Almighty God" (*Somn.* 1.72).[24] To see the light of God is to see the God who cannot be seen. Those who form their ideas of god from God, of light from light, attain to truth (ἀλήθειαν), since like is known by like; light is known by light. One sees God by the light of God. Ignorance deprives the soul of its faculties of seeing and hearing; it can prevent light and reason from entering it (*Ebr.* 157).

Philo develops Scripture's identification of God as light by means of philosophical categories. In some ways, because both John and Philo draw on Scripture, John is closer to Philo than to the philosophers, but John's identification of the light with the Word and with Jesus of Nazareth distinguishes the Gospel from both Philo and the philosophers, while accounting for its distinctive characterization of light. It is to the Gospel of John that we now turn.

II. Light in the Gospel of John

References to light occur throughout the first part of the Gospel of John (chapters 1–12), located in four clusters: (1) the prologue (1:4, 5, 7, 8, 9); (2) the brief editorial comment regarding the coming of the light into the world that leads people to shrink from its disclosing power (3:19–21); (3) the Tabernacles discourse (7:1–10:21) featuring Jesus' saying "I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5) and the healing of the blind man; and (4) the summary statements of the first part of the Gospel in which Jesus warns of the imminent departure of the light (12:35–36, 46). The references to light in the prologue already express key aspects of the character and function of light in the Gospel, while the account of the healing of the blind man and the repetition of Jesus' "I am" saying elaborates on and demonstrates them. We shall focus our discussion primarily on these two clusters of passages in John.

The Gospel begins with the creation of all things (πάντα) through the Word underscoring the scope of God's creative power.[25] Because of the

[24] God himself needs no light; even before the creation God "saw, using himself as light" (*Deus* 58; *Praem.* 44–45).

[25] The God "who lives forever created *all things*" (τὰ πάντα; Sir 18:1 LXX); is the "creator of *all things*" (2 Macc 1:24–25; 7:23); the "cause of *all things*" (Philo, *Somn.* 1.67); "the beginning and middle and end of *all things*" and the one who "breathes life into *all creatures*" (Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.190; *A. J.* 1.225; 12.22). Diogenes Laertius (7.147) writes that the Stoics call the deity "Dia (δία) because all things are due to him; Zeus (ζῆνα) insofar as he is the cause of life (ζῆν) or pervades all life." The explanation plays on the fact that both δία and ζῆνα are accusatives for the Greek name Zeus: he is the

Word's all-encompassing role as the agent of creation, the Word can rightly be characterized as the one in whom there is "life"; in turn, this life is light. This is as close as John gets to speaking of the Light in cosmological terms. But this light is not one of the phenomena of the physical world; it is not intrinsic to the world: the light "was coming into the world." Indeed, the world was made through this Logos-Light (1:3–4, 7–10).

The light comes into the world for the benefit of humankind: the "light of humankind" (τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων) is the light *for* them. John (the Baptist) bears witness to this *true* light so that *all* might believe through him, thus connecting the mission of the light in the world for *all* people with the creation of *all* things (1:3, 7). The characterization of the light as *true* (τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν) underscores its exclusivity and authenticity, and aligns the light with God "who is true" (3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3); who is worshiped in Spirit and truth by true worshipers (4:23); who gives true bread from heaven (6:32); and whom to know is eternal life (17:3). One comes to the light, then, by faith, because the light has come into the world to make it possible to see the light: by light one "sees" or believes in the light.

But there are impediments: "light" is immediately set over against darkness. Here we have two contraries, light and darkness, a pair also found throughout the "tables of polarities" in Greek philosophy.[26] Darkness is not merely the counterpoint of light but a power (1:5; 12:35) that seeks to overtake light; it is a sphere or realm of existence (1:5; 12:46) in which one tries to hide from exposure (3:19); it is the realm of death (8:12). But the relationship between light and darkness is asymmetrical: light is more powerful than darkness, withstanding attempts to extinguish it. The light *is shining* (φαίνει; present tense)[27] even unto the present time in the darkness; the darkness has not yet or ever (κατέλαβεν; a complexive aorist) overcome it. In John, the situation of humankind requires a light, extrinsic to the world: there is darkness, ignorance, blindness, death; light is needed for knowledge, seeing, and life.

But while the light is true, is still shining, and is intended for the good of humankind, it has not been understood, believed, or embraced (1:10–11; cf. 3:19). The world does not believe, accept or receive the light (1:7–

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cause (διά, on account of) of life (ζῆν). The Greek orator Aelius Aristides wrote, "Zeus made the All, and Zeus' work is all that is, the rivers and the earth and the sea and the sky and everything that it is in, over it, and under it; the gods, human beings and everything that has a soul, what one can see and what only the Spirit can grasp" (*Or. 43*, 7).

[26] Although Schwankl designates the antithesis of light and darkness as the "metaphor of contrast" *par excellence* (*Licht und Finsternis*, 357 [n. 1]), the more fundamental contrast in John is between life and death.

[27] The present tense (φαίνει) is important for understanding the temporal limitation of the light in chapter 12.

10).[28] By definition, light is that which is visible and gives light so that one may see by it, but here the light may be rejected or spurned, even as Plato's cave dwellers refuse to leave their shadows and darkness and distrust those who try to convince them that they have been seeing only shadows. The problem lies not with the light, which is *true*, but with those who fail to see or who will not see.[29]

The light of which John speaks is personalized and historicized: this light was "coming into the world" and was in fact "in the world" (vv. 9–10); the Word who is the true light became flesh (1:14). The true light from God is not discerned by turning away from the flesh or the Word's very material activity in the world, but by discerning the works and words of God *in* the works and words of the Incarnate One. The incarnate Word is not a shadow or image of the suprasensual Word: here the true light is embodied so that his glory may be seen. We might here adapt Augustine's comment, "I did not read in [the philosophers] that 'the Light was made flesh and came to dwell among us'" (*Conf.* 7.9).[30] The embodiment of this light in flesh also explains the warnings that the light will be taken away: they refer to Jesus' death. But since he is the life of the world, he will live: and his light will continue shining in the darkness.

In the Tabernacles discourse, Jesus presents himself as the "light of the world" (8:12; 9:5). Here the cosmological dimension recedes into the background without entirely disappearing, while the illuminating character of light comes to the fore, and is graphically illustrated in Jesus' healing of the blind man. This narrative provides a concrete example of Jesus' exhortation early in the discourse to "judge with right judgment" (7:24). In order to judge rightly, one must see rightly, and the narrative raises the question, what does it take to see rightly, to come to the light?

In brief: Jesus must act. Even as the light shines in the darkness, Jesus opens the eyes of the blind man. The True Light must give light. But subsequently "right judgment" is called for (7:24); one must discern that the healing signifies that Jesus comes from God and does the light- and life-giving work of God. When he discerns that, the man becomes a follower, a disciple of Jesus (9:27–28). Those who follow Jesus, the light of the world, have light to see where they are going because they are follow-

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[28] The prologue stresses the human act of comprehension, or its failure, with a variety of words: "believe" (πιστεύσωσιν, vv. 7, 12), "accept" (παρέλαβον, v. 11) and "receive" (ἔλαβον, v. 12).

[29] Silke Peterson contends that John is uninterested in the function of light in knowledge and recognition ("Die Ich-bin-Worte als Metaphern am Beispiel der Lichtmetaphorik," in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* [ed. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt, and R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 121–38). But in John "light" is inseparable from belief and response.

[30] Augustine of course writes, "I did not read that the *Logos* was made flesh."

ing him; as they persevere (abide, continue; μένειν) in following him, they will walk in the sphere where right judgment about him is possible (8:12; 9:4–5; 12:35–36; 16:7–11). Following the light brings the assurance of having "the light of life," communion with the one true God (17:3).

While "following" (ἀκολουθεῖν) Jesus often entails his physical presence (1:43), "following" can also refer to discipleship that does not require Jesus' physical presence, as it will for Simon Peter and the other disciples after Jesus' departure (21:22). As is often noted, there is no light imagery after chapter 12. Jesus' promises in the Farewell Discourses that the disciples will "see" him, while the world will be unable to: such statements assume that Jesus is "absent" in the sense that he is not physically present. Hence, the warnings that the light will be "taken away" (12:35–36). Jesus' resurrection makes it possible for the light to continue shining in darkness (1:5). Now, however, that shining light must be perceived without the faculty of sight. The disciples see him as they receive, believe, and follow the light that still shines in the darkness.

There are those who have always had their physical sight but are blind because they fail to "grasp" (see, comprehend) who Jesus is, even as the prologue had foreshadowed (1:5; 9:41; cf. 8:24).[31] Although the light has come into the world not for judgment but for salvation, not all will see, or want to see: like Plato's cave dwellers, they turn from the light and in so doing pass judgment upon themselves (3:17–21). When Jesus promises his disciples that he will not abandon them in the hostile world, in the darkness, but that he will "come" to them, dwell with them, and send the Paraclete among them, he assures them that "the light shines in darkness." It will still be possible to know God (1:18; 17:3), to perceive the glory of the Incarnate word (1:14; 2:11; 11:4, 40), and to follow the light so to have "the light of life" (8:12). Light may be visible to sight; but as the episode with the blind man shows, some who have the light standing in front of them do not "see." They are, in their own words, "blind," without knowing

[31] Teiresias and Phineus were among the blind "seers": they lacked physical sight but had the gift of true sight (for Teiresias, see Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 375, 415–419, 455, 747; Apollodorus 1.9.21; 3.6.7). Seneca speaks of Harpaste, his wife's "female clown," who did not realize she had become blind and kept asking for rooms with more light. Comparing her situation to humans blind to their own faults, Seneca comments that the blind ask for a guide, while those who think they see delude themselves, failing to see the evil within (*Lucil.* 122). With regard to the capacity of human beings to delude themselves, he compared the self-deception of their souls to blindness: "How much more darkness there is in their souls! Such a man is internally dazed; his vision is darkened; he envies the blind. And what man ever had eyes for the purpose of seeing in the dark? You ask me how this depravity comes upon the soul – this habit of reversing the daylight and giving over one's whole existence to the night?" (*Lucil.* 50)

it (9:40–41). The blind man attains both sight and insight: he sees the one who heals him, leading him ultimately to declare, "Lord, I believe."

There are two levels of seeing in John: there is (physical) sight and there is insight. The blind man is given both: the physical sight he attains is not an obstacle to true insight, but bears witness that Jesus is the light of the world. The one through whom the world was made, through whom light comes into the world, opens the eyes of all who are blind: the true light grants both sight and insight. But sight does not guarantee understanding or insight; the eyes are not always sure witnesses. In John "sight" becomes the "insight" of faith through God's work and instruction (6:44–45) and the work of the Spirit (14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11) that enable one to see rightly, to follow, and to trust (3:21; 8:12; 12:36).

III. A Brief Concluding Remark

As noted earlier, John's distinctive use of light imagery lies in his identification of the light with the Word made flesh, a point that might seem so obvious as to be banal. But that particular identification not only distinguishes John from the philosophic tradition, but at points from the Old Testament and subsequent Johannine tradition as well.

There are points of contact between the philosophic discourse about light and the Gospel of John. In the philosophical literature, light is an ordinary phenomenon of the world; its opposite is darkness. Corresponding to the natural human preference for light over darkness, light is assessed positively, symbolizing a variety of blessings that come to human beings, the most important of which is life. Darkness is feared, and it symbolizes ignorance and death. In terms of epistemology, light is both that which is seen, and that which one sees by. In fact, one sees everything else by the light. Light may be the ultimate goal of knowing, but it is more often the means to knowing that which is ultimate.

Not surprisingly, much of this is common to John. Because of the characteristics of light and its centrality to ordinary human life, its symbolic connotations are fairly stable across the various conceptual worlds. But there are differences. This light is not intrinsic to or inherent in the world: it comes from outside of it, although the world owes its very existence to it. While darkness is its counterpart, light and darkness are not evenly matched: there is no cosmological duality, let alone dualism. By locating light in the person of Jesus, the vocabulary of comprehension takes on a richer and more complex meaning: it includes faith, following, and love. The presence of light in the world illumines and guides as one follows it, but the light also provides assurance, salvation, and life. Light not only shows the way to truth, salvation, or life; the light embodies them.

Unlike the Old Testament and 1 John (1:5–7), the Gospel does not explicitly characterize God as light. As elsewhere, certain descriptions and roles assigned to God in the Old Testament (shepherd, king, Lord) are appropriated in the Gospel for Jesus, as are the characterization of God's salvation, truth, Word, or Torah as "light."[32] At this point, it would be interesting to probe further the differences between John and 1 John. And much more could be said about Philo's description of God as the ultimate light emanating innumerable rays of light, and about the Logos as the manifestation of the God who is, with respect to the Gospel of John. To be sure, the Gospel does not share all Philo's concerns about protecting the invisible and immaterial God. And yet, in John God is the God whom no one has ever seen, except the Son (1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 14:9). Perhaps one could also say that the light that no one had seen was now manifest and thus seen as the light that was coming into the world: this is the Lord whose glory could be seen (1:14; 12:41). Such further investigations might suggest other or even possibly closer points of contact between the Gospel's light imagery and that of ancient Greek philosophy, possibly indicating how the Gospel shapes the imaginations of those whose primary points of reference are other than the imagery of Scripture.

[32] Pss 36:9; 44:3; 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23; Isa 9:2; 58:8–10; 60:1; Mic 7:9.

„Zeichen“ (σημεῖον)

Philosophischer Inhalt und Gebrauch des Begriffs im Johannesevangelium

Jean Zumstein

Wie ist der philosophische Inhalt des Begriffs „Zeichen“ (σημεῖον) zu untersuchen? Verschiedene Möglichkeiten kommen in den Sinn.

Die erste ist philosophiegeschichtlich orientiert.[1] In dieser Hypothese geht es darum zu erforschen, wie der Begriff „Zeichen“ in der antiken Philosophie und Literatur (insbesondere in der Historiographie) benutzt wurde. Die Ausrichtung einer solchen Untersuchung ist nicht in erster Linie *genealogisch*, als ob es darum ginge festzulegen, von welcher philosophischen oder religiösen Strömung die johanneische Auffassung des Zeichens abhängig sei. Denn zwischen der griechisch-philosophischen Tradition und dem johanneischen Milieu kann kein *direktes* historisches Verhältnis nachgewiesen werden. Kein Zitat, keine Andeutung, kein rhetorisches Modell der griechischen Philosophie sind im Johannesevangelium zu

[1] Vgl. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 133–43; K. H. Rengstorf, Art. „σημεῖον κτλ“, *TWNT* 7:199–268; W. Wilkens, *Zeichen und Werke. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des 4. Evangeliums in Erzählungs- und Redestoff* (ATANT 55; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1969); W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel. Tradition and Redaction* (NovTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1972); W. J. Bittner, *Jesu Zeichen im Johannesevangelium. Die Messias-Erkenntnis im Johannesevangelium vor ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund* (WUNT 2/26; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); C. Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen. Die Wundergeschichten des Johannesevangeliums literarisch untersucht. Mit einem Ausblick auf Johannes 21* (WUNT 2/69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); W. H. Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 2/186; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); R. Hirsch-Luipold, „Klartext in Bildern: ἀληθινός κτλ., παροιμία – παρρησία, σημεῖον als Signalwörter für eine bildhafte Darstellungsform im Johannesevangelium“, in *Imagery in the Gospel of John* (Hg. J. Frey, J. G. van der Watt und R. Zimmermann; WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 61–102. Reiches Textmaterial in *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, Bd. I/2: *Texte zum Johannesevangelium* (Hg. U. Schnelle unter Mitarbeit von M. Labahn und M. Lang; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2001).

finden. Auch ein *direkter* Einfluss von Philo über die johanneische Schule ist nicht beweisbar. Die kulturelle und religiöse Welt der johanneischen Literatur ist vor allem biblisch-jüdisch geprägt. Von daher ist es methodisch ertragreicher, mit dem Begriff „*Analogie*" zu arbeiten.[2] Dementsprechend wird man heuristisch die folgende Frage stellen: Wie hat die komplexe und facettenreiche Umwelt des johanneischen Christentums – sei es die pagane, sei es die jüdische – den Begriff „Zeichen" verstanden und benutzt? Und inwiefern sind diese Analogien für das Verständnis des vierten Evangeliums von Bedeutung? In diesem Sinn wird im ersten Teil dieses Beitrags ein kleiner Überblick über die Auffassung des „Zeichens" in der antiken Welt geboten werden, während im zweiten Teil das johanneische Verständnis des σημεῖον behandelt werden soll.

Um unserer Fragestellung gebührend Rechnung zu tragen, ist es aber auch sinnvoll, einen anderen Aspekt zu berücksichtigen. In der neueren Philosophiegeschichte, insbesondere mit der Entstehung der Semiotik, ist eine intensive Reflexion über den Begriff „Zeichen" entfaltet worden. Unter den Gründern der modernen Semiotik ist in erster Linie der Name von Charles Sanders Peirce zu erwähnen. Gewiss kommt es nicht in Betracht, die ganze Theorie von Peirce vorzustellen und anzuwenden. Hingegen ist es angemessen, in einer heuristischen Perspektive anhand seines berühmten Dreiecks einige Überlegungen über das johanneische Zeichen zu entfalten. Das Dreieck von Peirce besteht aus drei Elementen, die in Interaktion stehen: Es handelt sich um das Zeichen, das Objekt und den Interpretanten.

Wie ist dieses Dreieck zu begreifen?

> Die Wissenschaft von den Zeichen oder Semiotik bringt die Wissenschaftslogik mit der Logik des Schriftverständnisses in Verbindung. Peirce bietet die bedeutendste Zeichenlogik, indem er Zeichen als etwas definiert, das sich auf etwas anderes bezieht und zwar kraft seines Interpretanten (des Kontextes seiner Interpretation) […]. Der dritte Terminus in Peirces Definition weist darauf hin, dass die Bedeutung eines Zeichens nicht unpersönlich, sondern stets in Beziehung zu dessen Adressaten gegeben ist.[3]

In den folgenden Ausführungen, möchte ich diese drei Begriffe (Zeichen, Objekt, Verweis) mit der antiken Literatur bzw. mit dem vierten Evangelium in Verbindung bringen und ihre Interaktion analysieren.

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[2] Vgl. J. Frey, „Auf der Suche nach dem Kontext des vierten Evangeliums", in idem, *Studien zu den Johanneischen Schriften*, Bd. 1: *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten* (Hg. J. Schlegel; WUNT 307; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 76–78.

[3] P. Ochs, Art. „Zeichen", *RGG*[4] 8:1798.

I. Das philosophisch-religiöse Verständnis des Zeichens in der Antike

Im *Wörterbuch der antiken Philosophie* von C. Horn und C. Rapp wird der Begriff „Zeichen“ auf folgende Weise definiert: „Das *sēmeion* ist entweder ein sprachlicher Ausdruck, der auf eine bestimmte Sache referiert bzw. sie bezeichnet (→ *sēmainein*), oder ein gegenwärtiger, sichtbarer Sachverhalt, der auf einen nicht gegenwärtigen, unsichtbaren Sachverhalt schließen lässt.“[4] Diese Definition lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit auf die folgenden Elemente. Zunächst ist σημεῖον „ein Formalbegriff, der einen Verweisvorgang bezeichnet“.[5] Der Begriff ist funktional und gehört „zum Bereich der Kommunikation und Erkenntnis“.[6] Ursprünglich hat er keine ausgeprägte religiöse Konnotation. In den meisten Fällen ist σημεῖον „ein sinnlich wahrnehmbares Zeichen, das auf verborgene oder unbekannte Sachverhalte schließen lässt bzw. auf sie verweist“.[7] Wenn es aber um religiöse Zusammenhänge geht, hat σημεῖον sowohl im paganen als auch im biblischen Kontext die folgende Redestruktur: „Durch das Zeichen kommunizieren Gott und Mensch miteinander und verleihen ihrer Beziehung sichtbaren Ausdruck.“[8] Klassische Beispiele dieses Modells sind in der biblischen Tradition der Regenbogen oder die Beschneidung.

Diese allgemeine Begriffsbestimmung lässt sich durch eine kleine Auswahl von antiken Texten dokumentieren.

1. Einige Beispiele aus der philosophischen Tradition (von Aristoteles bis Sextus Empiricus)

Bei *Aristoteles* (4. Jh. v. Chr.) erscheint der Begriff „Zeichen“ sowohl in der Rhetorik als auch in der Logik. Somit gehört σημεῖον zum Bereich der Erkenntnistheorie, und seine Verweisfunktion steht im Vordergrund. Das σημεῖον wird definiert als „das, bei dem, wenn es ist, eine bestimmte andere Sache ist oder das, bei dem, wenn es früher oder später geschehen ist, eine bestimmte andere Sache geschehen ist“.[9] Diese allgemeine Definition assoziiert die Verweisfunktion sowohl mit räumlichen als auch mit chronologischen Kategorien.

Die Rolle des σημεῖον wird im Rahmen der Logik, insbesondere als Bestandteil eines Syllogismus, analysiert. In diesem Fall gilt es zu bestim-

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[4] J. Brachtendorf, Art. „Sēmeion (Zeichen; lat.: *signum*)“, in *Wörterbuch der antiken Philosophie* (Hg. C. Horn und C. Rapp; München: Beck, [2]2008), 392–94.

[5] Hirsch-Luipold, „Klartext“, 90 (Anm. 1).

[6] Ibid., 90–91.

[7] Ibid., 90.

[8] Ibid., 91.

[9] Aristoteles, An. pr. 70a7–9.

men, ob ein als Prämisse benutztes Zeichen zu einer schlüssigen Argumentation führt oder eben nicht. Nur zwingend ist ein Zeichen folgenden Typus: „Alle Frauen mit Milch sind schwanger; diese Frau hat Milch, diese Frau ist schwanger."[10] Das heißt aber: Die Plausibilität des Zeichens (in dem zitierten Beispiel, Muttermilch als Zeichen der Schwangerschaft) soll festgelegt werden, damit es in einer Argumentation überzeugend wirkt.

Für den *Epikureismus* spielt in der Kosmologie die Kategorie des Zeichens eine wichtige Rolle. Unter einem erkenntnistheoretischen Gesichtspunkt ermöglicht sie den Übergang vom Sichtbaren (die unmittelbare, beobachtbare Welt) zum Unsichtbaren (die Atome, die den Sinnen unzugänglich sind). Das Sichtbare wird zum Zeichen des Unsichtbaren. Die Entwicklung der Atomenlehre beruht also auf der Voraussetzung, dass die Phänomene als Zeichen verstanden werden können, und dies führt zu einer tieferen Erkenntnis des Kosmos.

Schließlich ist die Ansicht über das „Zeichen" in der antiken Skepsis kurz zu erwähnen. *Sextus Empiricus* (2. Jh. n. Chr.) vertritt auch eine formale Auffassung des σημεῖον, wo die Verweisfunktion konstitutiv ist: „Allgemein ist mit Zeichen dasjenige gemeint, was etwas anzuzeigen scheint."[11] Die Formulierung („scheint") zeigt jedoch, dass die Glaubwürdigkeit des Zeichens zur Diskussion steht.[12] Brachtendorf bemerkt: „Die antike Skepsis unterscheidet zwischen erinnerndem (*hypomnēstikon*) *s[ēmeion]* für Dinge, die bloß zeitweise nicht wahrnehmbar sind (Rauch als *s[ēmeion]* für Feuer), und anzeigendem (*endeiktikon*) *s[ēmeion]*, das offenbart, was von Natur verborgen ist. Die Existenz der ersteren wird zugestanden, die des letzteren aber bestritten."[13]

Fazit: In der griechisch-philosophischen Tradition zeichnet sich der Begriff σημεῖον durch drei Elemente aus. Zuerst geht es um einen formalen Begriff, der zum Bereich der Erkenntnistheorie gehört. Sein zentraler Inhalt ist die Verweisfunktion. Dann ist die Wahrnehmung des Zeichens empirisch bzw. visuell. Schließlich besitzt das Konzept keine spezifisch religiöse Bedeutung.

2. Semeion in der antiken Literatur und Historiographie

Obwohl der Begriff σημεῖον nicht wörtlich auftaucht, wird in einer Passage des Epos *Odyssee* der Donner als göttliches Zeichen vorgestellt.[14] In

[10] Ibid., 70a8–23, und *Rhet*. 1357b1–25.

[11] Sextus Empiricus, *Math*. 8.143.

[12] Ibid., 8.141–143.

[13] Vgl. Brachtendorf, Art. „Sēmeion", 393–94 (Anm. 4).

[14] Homer, *Od*. 21.413–415: „[413] … Und Zeus gab Zeichen (σήματα) mit mächtigem Donner. / [414] Freude durchfuhr da den großen Dulder, den hehren Odysseus, / [415]

diesem Fall wird der Donner zum (Vor-)Zeichen, das Zeus dem Odysseus gibt, und dieses Zeichen (σῆμα) wird als Wunder (τέρας) qualifiziert. Allerdings handelt es sich nicht um ein Wunder im biblischen Sinn, da kein Naturgesetz außer Kraft gesetzt wird, sondern eher um ein göttliches Omen.

Ein weiteres klassisches Beispiel des religiösen Gebrauchs von σημεῖον ist in den Dialogen von *Plato* mit dem berühmten Daimonion von Sokrates gegeben. Sowohl in der *Apologie*[15] als auch im *Phaedrus*[16] wird die innere Stimme, die das Verhalten des Sokrates bestimmt, „Zeichen Gottes“ (τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σημεῖον) oder „das gewohnte Zeichen“ (τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον) genannt. Das Wort σημεῖον gehört hier zum Bereich der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und dem Menschen und findet seinen Ausdruck in der Innerlichkeit. Dieses Daimonion wird für die Gesprächspartner des Sokrates nicht wahrnehmbar und objektiviert sich auch nicht in einem übernatürlichen Geschehen. Es gehört zum Gebiet des Gewissens.

Diodoros Siculus (1. Jh. v. Chr.) lebte in Rom und in Ägypten. Bei ihm zeichnet sich der Begriff σημεῖον insbesondere dadurch aus, dass das Zeichen durch die Menschen wahrnehmbar bzw. für sie sichtbar ist. Die religiöse Komponente ist unbestreitbar. Einerseits sind die Zeichen der Präsenz Gottes in der Welt zu beobachten. „Auf jeden Fall hat der Gott an vielen Stellen auf dieser Erde Spuren (τοῦ θεοῦ σημεῖα) seiner wohltätigen Anwesenheit hinterlassen. Und so ist es kein Wunder, wenn sie alle glauben, gerade zu ihnen, ihrer Stadt, ihrem Land habe der Gott ein besonderes Verhältnis.“[17] Anderseits aber ist ganz speziell das Heiligtum der Raum, wo göttliche Zeichen (σημεῖον) geschehen.[18] Im Tempel des Apollo wird der Flug eines Adlers, der die Tauben des Tempels angreift und einige erhascht, als Zeichen eines nahen Herrschaftswechsels in Delphi interpretiert. Das göttliche Zeichen wird hier als Vorzeichen eines künftigen Ereignisses gedeutet. Aber auch wenn es sich um einen geläufigen und natürlichen Vorfall handelt, ist nur ein ausgebildeter Interpret in der Lage, diese Begebenheit zu entziffern. In diesem Fall ist zwar das Zeichen wahrnehmbar, aber nicht unmittelbar verstehbar.

Plutarch, ein Zeitgenosse des Urchristentums, entfaltete eine theologische Zeichentheorie als göttliches Kommunikationsmittel. Die mittelplatonische Prägung seiner Weltanschauung erscheint in seiner Definition des Zeichens: „Absolut ist der Gedanke uns nämlich unsichtbar, in einem anderen aber und durch ein anderes wird er sichtbar, indem er durch dessen

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dass ihm der Sohn des verschlagenen Kronos dies Wunder (τέρας) nun sandte.“ Vgl. *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 128 (Anm. 1).

[15] Vgl. Plato, *Apol*. 40a–c.

[16] Vgl. Plato, *Phaedr*. 242b–d.

[17] Diodorus Siculus 3.66.3.

[18] Ibid., 16.27.2: „Es widerfuhr auch ein Zeichen im Heiligtum des Apollo.“

Natur ausgefüllt wird."[19] Diese Auffassung kommt zum Ausdruck in einer Passage, wo Plutarch einen Ausspruch von Heraklit zitiert, der die Kommunikationsweise des delphischen Orakelherrn beschreibt: „Weder rede er (offen), noch auch verberge er die Dinge, sondern er deute sie zeichenhaft an (σημαίνει)."[20] Die Zeichen sind aber nicht eindeutig und verlangen von ihren Adressaten eine sachgemäße Interpretation. Diese Schwierigkeit erscheint in einer berühmten Passage der Alexander-Vita (75:1):

> Nachdem Alexander nun einmal den göttlichen Dingen gegenüber schwach, schreckhaft und ängstlich geworden war, war keine ungewohnte und seltsame Erscheinung so geringfügig, dass er sie nicht als Anzeichen und Vorbedeutung nahm (ὃ μὴ τέρας ἐποιεῖτο καὶ σημεῖον), sondern das Königsschloss war voll von Leuten, die opferten, Reinigungszeremonien vollzogen, weissagten und Alexander mit albernen Ängsten erfüllten.

Diese Stelle vertritt keineswegs eine Disqualifizierung der benannten Wunderzeichen,[21] sondern eine „kritische Haltung gegen eine abergläubische Deutung der Zeichen".[22] Das Paradebeispiel der religiösen Auffassung des Zeichens für Plutarch findet sich aber in seiner Schrift *De genio Socratis*, wo er das Phänomen des Daimonion des Sokrates ausführlich behandelt.[23]

Lukian von Samosata (2. Jh. n. Chr.) benutzt den Begriff Zeichen (σημεῖον), um von einem Fluss zu sprechen, „der statt Wassers einen Wein führte". Dieser überraschende Tatbestand wird als „augenscheinliches Zeichen, dass Bacchus einst hier gewesen (τὰ σημεῖα τῆς Διονύσου ἐπιδημίας)",[24] interpretiert. Das durchaus übernatürliche Phänomen wird sinnlich wahrnehmbar, aber als Zeichen betrachtet, das auf eine andere Realität verweist. Diese Realität wird dank der religiösen bzw. mythologischen Tradition dekodiert: Es handelt sich um die Spur der Präsenz des Bacchus.

Schließlich benutzt *Cassius Dio* (2.–3. Jh. n. Chr.) das Wort σημεῖον, um die übernatürlichen Vorzeichen zu bezeichnen, die den Tod des Kaisers Vespasian angekündigt hatten: die lange Präsenz des Kometen am Himmel und die selbsttätige Öffnung des Grabmals des Augustus.[25] Diese Zeichen gehören wieder zum Bereich des Sichtbaren, und σημεῖον wird hier als Vorzeichen verstanden. Das heißt: Das Schicksal des Menschen wird durch eine höhere Macht bestimmt und durch Vorzeichen vom Himmel her kommuniziert. Die beiden hier erwähnten σημεῖα sind in der antiken Kultur bekannt und signalisieren die Präsenz eminenter geschichtlichen Gestalten.

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[19] Plutarch, *Pyth. orac.* 21 (*Mor.* 404C).
[20] Ibid. (*Mor.* 404D).
[21] So Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:205 (Anm. 1).
[22] So Hirsch-Luipold, „Klartext", 91 (Anm. 1).
[23] Ibid., 91–92.
[24] Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 1.17.
[25] Cassius Dio 66.17.2.

3. Semeion in der Literatur des antiken Judentums

In der Literatur des antiken Judentums weist der Begriff σημεῖον dieselben Sinnelemente auf, die bei der kurzen Darstellung der griechisch-hellenistischen Philosophie und Literatur dargestellt wurden. Das Phänomen des Verweises hat eine entscheidende Funktion im Rahmen der Erkenntnistheorie. Das Zeichen wird empirisch, in erster Linie durch einen Sehvorgang, wahrgenommen. Ein Element oder ein Vorgang der vorhandenen Wirklichkeit führt zur Entdeckung einer verborgenen, unsichtbaren oder zukünftigen Realität. Dieser Erkenntnisgewinn kann sowohl im profanen als auch im religiösen Bereich aufkommen. Auf religiösem Gebiet bekommt die Kommunikation zwischen Gott und Mensch durch das Zeichen sichtbaren Ausdruck. Die Dekodierung des Zeichens hängt von der Kenntnis der kulturell-religiösen Enzyklopädie ab, kann aber Interpretationskonflikte auslösen. Das Eingreifen eines qualifizierten Interpreten ist unumgänglich.

Einige Beispiele dokumentieren diese Vorstellung des Zeichens.

In der zweiten Vision des *Testaments Levis* in den *Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen* wird Levi mitgeteilt, dass sein „Same zum Zeichen für die Herrlichkeit (σημεῖον τῆς δόξης) des kommenden Herrn“ wird (*T. Levi* 8:11). In diesem Fall verwirklicht sich das „Zeichen“ mit einer für einen Israeliten entscheidenden Realität, nämlich seiner Nachkommenschaft, die nach der biblischen Tradition als göttlicher Segen verstanden wird. Das Zeichen verweist auf die Zukunft und offenbart die Herrlichkeit Gottes.

In den *Sibyllinen* wird der Begriff „Zeichen“ in Verbindung mit dem „Ende der Dinge auf Erden“ verwendet.[26] Es handelt sich um himmlische, apokalyptische Zeichen, die auf das Ende der Welt verweisen. Das apokalyptische Wörterbuch, das enthüllt wird, erlaubt dem Leser, den Verlauf der Geschichte zu deuten. Interessanterweise wird hier der Begriff Zeichen mit Orakel verbunden. Sprecherin ist die jüdische Sybille, welche die Zukunft prophezeit.

Als Jude der Diaspora kennt *Philo* den Sprachgebrauch der Septuaginta (z. B. das Kainszeichen gemäß Gen 4:15 [ἔθετο κύριος ὁ θεὸς σημεῖον τῷ Καιν] oder die Gestirne, die gemäß Gen 1:14 „als Zeichen für Festzeiten, Tage und Jahre [σημεῖα καὶ εἰς καιροὺς καὶ εἰς ἡμέρας καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτούς]“ dienen sollen). Anhand dieser beiden Beispiele wird ersichtlich, dass „das Wort bei Philo im Rahmen der Grundbedeutung [bleibt], nach der es solche Dinge oder Vorgänge bezeichnet, die auf dem Weg über die Wahr-

[26] Vgl. *Sib*. 3.796–807. „Und ich will ein Zeichen (σῆμα) verkünden, das unschwer zu deuten ist, dass du erkennst, wann endlich auf Erden das Ende der Dinge sein wird“ (*Sib*. 3.796–797).

nehmung zu bestimmter Einsicht oder Erkenntnis führen".[27] Auf dieser konkreten Ebene, die einen Sehvorgang impliziert, kann zum Beispiel σημεῖον in der ärztlichen Sprache das Symptom einer Krankheit beschreiben. Es kann aber auch um außergewöhnliche Vorgänge gehen, die zu einer Belehrung führen. Diese Unterweisung hat die pragmatische Funktion, Glauben zu wecken. Um seinen Auftrag zu beglaubigen, bekommt Mose von Gott drei wunderbare Zeichen, welche die Israeliten überzeugen sollen („Sollten sie noch immer ungläubig sein, so werden sie durch drei Zeichen belehrt [τρισὶ σημείοις ἀναδιδαχθέντες], die bisher kein Mensch weder gesehen hat noch vom Hörensagen kennt, und werden ihren Sinn ändern" [*Mos.* 1.76]).

Bei Philo spielt aber der Begriff σημεῖον eine beherrschende Rolle als argumentative Kategorie. Er bedeutet dann „Hinweis", „Argument", „Beweis".[28] Zum Beispiel wird immer wieder in Deduktionen die Wendung σημεῖον δέ (= „das geht mit Sicherheit aus Folgendem hervor") als Einführung eines Beleges (z. B. eines Schriftwortes) oder eines Beweises gebraucht. Bei der von Philo praktizierten allegorischen Interpretation der Schrift heißt σημεῖον so viel wie „weist hin auf …, will genommen werden im Sinne von …".[29] In der Kaingeschichte zum Beispiel ist das „Feld" (τὸ πεδίον) ein σημεῖον, das auf Wettkampf und Streit hinweist (*Det.* 1: τὸ γὰρ πεδίον … σημεῖον ἀμίλλης καὶ διαμάχης εἶναι). Das „Zeichen" kann aber auch zum religiösen Bereich gehören. Sowohl der Trompetenschall bei der Gesetzgebung am Sinai (*Spec.* 2.189) als auch die „ägyptischen Zeichen" (τὰ κατ' Αἴγυπτον σημεῖα [*Mos.* 1.210]) verweisen auf das, was von Gott kommt und was er gibt. Der Begriff „Zeichen" wird zu einer hermeneutischen Kategorie, die eine tiefere Interpretation der Schrift ermöglicht: „Im Grunde ist für Philo die ganze Schrift ein unerschöpfliches Reservoir an σημεῖα."[30] Von daher wird klar, dass im Unterschied zum Johannesevangelium σημεῖον kein Terminus technicus für mirakulöse Vorgänge ist.

Josephus hat den Begriff σημεῖον aus Gen 4:15 (καὶ ἔθετο κύριος ὁ θεὸς σημεῖον τῷ Καιν [„Und Gott der Herr machte ein Zeichen an Kain"]) übernommen. Interessant ist, wie der jüdische Historiograph diese Stelle kommentiert:[31] καὶ σημεῖον ἐπιβαλὼν ᾧ γνώριμος ἂν εἴη („nachdem er ihm ein Zeichen aufgedrückt hatte, *woran er kenntlich sein würde*"). Zwei Aspekte sind erwähnenswert: Einerseits ist das Zeichen empirisch durch das Sehen zugänglich, andererseits bezweckt es eine Erkenntnis.

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[27] Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:220 (Anm. 1). Erwähnenswert ist, dass Philo, gemäß der griechischen Mathematik, σημεῖον auch im Sinne von „Punkt" (*Mos.* 2.115; *Opif.* 49; 98 usw.) benutzen kann.

[28] Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:220 (Anm. 1).

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 221 (Anm. 1).

[31] Josephus, *A. J.* 1.59.

Diese beiden konstitutiven Elemente erscheinen im profanen Gebrauch des Wortes bei Josephus, insbesondere in der militärischen Sprache. In diesem Kontext bezeichnet σημεῖον einen „Befehl mittels eines lediglich sichtbaren Zeichens",[32] das heißt ein „vorher vereinbartes Winkzeichen oder Signal", das ein Manöver in Gang setzt. Der Klang der Trompete kann dieselbe Rolle spielen.[33] Eine Erkenntnis wird dank der Wahrnehmung eines vereinbarten Signals erworben und löst eine Handlung aus.

Der formale und funktionale Gebrauch von σημεῖον findet aber auch Anwendung im religiösen Bereich. Da für Josephus Gott sowohl die Geschichte der Völker als auch die Geschicke des Einzelnen lenkt, können gewisse Lebenssituationen oder Phänomene als Zeichen betrachtet werden, die somit zu einer bestimmten Erkenntnis führen. Am Tage des Tempelbrandes zum Beispiel hätten nach Josephus viele Juden, die auf falsche Propheten gehört hatten, im Hof des Tempels Zuflucht gesucht, um die „Zeichen der Rettung zu erwarten" (δεξομένους τὰ σημεῖα τῆς σωτηρίας).[34] Die hier erhofften Zeichen verweisen eindeutig auf das eschatologische Kommen des göttlichen Heils. Ein anderes interessantes Beispiel ist der Kaiser Vespasian selbst, der im Rückblick bestimmte Episoden seines Lebens als Hinweis auf seine derzeitige Würde verstand, darunter die Szene, wo „der gefangene Josephus ihn als zukünftigen Kaiser begrüßt hatte" (ἀναμιμνήσκεται γὰρ τά τε ἄλλα σημεῖα πολλὰ δ' αὐτῷ γεγόνει πανταχοῦ προφαίνοντα τὴν ἡγεμονίαν καὶ τὰς τοῦ Ἰωσήπου φωνὰς ὃς αὐτὸν ἔτι ζῶντος Νέρωνος αὐτοκράτορα προσειπεῖν ἐθάρσησεν [„Er erinnerte sich nämlich jetzt aller *Zeichen*, die ihm seine Kaiserwürde vorbedeutet hatten – und deren hatte er an den verschiedensten Orten viele bekommen –, darunter aber insbesondere der Aussprüche des Josephus, welcher ihn noch zu Lebzeiten Neros mit dem Worte ‚Kaiser' anzusprechen gewagt hatte."]).[35]

In den bisher genannten Beispielen wurde deutlich, dass σημεῖον bei Josephus – im Unterschied zum Johannesevangelium – nicht einfach mit „Wunder" (τέρας) zu identifizieren ist. Alle geschichtlichen Ereignisse bzw. weltlichen Phänomene können „Zeichen" werden.[36] Jedoch ist hinzuzufügen, dass bei Josephus σημεῖον auch ein Wunder sein kann. In dieser Hinsicht sind insbesondere die Zeichen, die sich im Rahmen des Auszugs aus Ägypten abgespielt hatten, zu erwähnen (vgl. den Gebrauch von σημεῖον in *A. J.* 2.274, 276, 280). Diese „ägyptischen" Zeichen zeichnen sich durch zwei charakteristische Aspekte aus. Einerseits sind sie das Werk

[32] Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:221 (Anm. 1). Vgl. Josephus, *B. J.* 3.105 (ὄψεις δὲ σημείοις).

[33] Josephus, *B. J.* 6.68–70.

[34] Josephus, *B. J.* 6.285.

[35] Josephus, *B. J.* 6.623. Vgl. Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:222 (Anm. 1).

[36] Vgl. den Zusammenbruch eines Hauses als Zeichen (σημεῖον) für Pilatus (Josephus, *B. J.* 1.311–332) oder das von Hiskia verlangte Zeichen, um seine Genesung zu bestätigen (Josephus, *A. J.* 10.28–29).

Gottes und verweisen auf seine Gegenwart[37] als höchstem und wahrem Gott unter den Israeliten. Andererseits aber sind diese Zeichen immer mit der Frage des Glaubens verbunden. Ihre Funktion besteht darin, Glauben zu wecken und zu vertiefen (vgl. *A. J.* 2.274, 276, 283).

II. Das johanneische Verständnis des Zeichens[38]

1. Das Zeichen

Wenn wir uns mit dem vierten Evangelium befassen, welches Element der Erzählwelt kann als „Zeichen" bezeichnet werden? Nach 2:11, 4:54, 6:14, 12:18 handelt es sich um die *erzählten* Wundergeschichten. Diese Definition trifft aber auch auf die Wundergeschichten, die bloß erwähnt sind, ohne erzählt zu werden, zu (vgl. die Summarien). Diese johanneische Wortwahl ist jedoch keineswegs innovativ, sie ist in der alttestamentlich-jüdischen Tradition bekannt (vgl. 4:42) und auch in den synoptischen Evangelien bezeugt (vgl. das Motiv der Zeichenforderung[39]).

Wie ist das Phänomen „Zeichen" zu charakterisieren? Bei Johannes bezeichnet der Begriff auf exklusive Weise Handlungen Jesu bzw. bestimmte von Jesus durchgeführte wunderhafte Vorgänge (δύναμις). Das Zeichen gehört zum Gebiet des ποιεῖν (2:11, 23; 3:2, 54; 6:2, 14, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30) und der δείξις (δείκνυμι, vgl. 2:18). Im Unterschied dazu wird nie ein Wort des johanneischen Jesus als „Zeichen" bezeichnet. Die Konsequenz liegt auf der Hand: Die johanneischen Zeichen werden visuell wahrgenommen (2:23; 6:2: θεωρεῖν; 4:48; 6:14, 26: ὁρᾶν).

Eine gewisse Plastizität des Begriffs kann aber nicht ausgeschlossen werden. In der Szene mit Thomas kommt das Paar ὁρᾶν – πιστεύειν vor (20:25, 29), das im Rest des Evangeliums mit Zeichen in Verbindung gebracht wird. Das würde bedeuten – es ist aber umstritten –, dass die österliche Erscheinung des johanneischen Christus als Zeichen einzustufen wäre.[40] Außerdem wird in der Forschung gefragt, ob der Begriff „Zeichen"

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[37] Josephus, *A. J.* 2.237: Οἱ δ' Ἰσραηλῖται τοῦτ' ἰδόντες ἔπεσον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ προσεκύνουν ἕνα θεὸν καὶ μέγιστον καὶ ἀληθῆ μόνον.

[38] Vgl. R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (UTB 630; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, ^{9}1984), 396–97; F. Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Bd. I (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 642–44; Hirsch-Luipold, „Klartext", 89–99 (Anm. 1); Rengstorf, *TWNT* 7:241–57 (Anm. 1); U. Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium. Eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des vierten Evangeliums in der johanneischen Schule* (FRLANT 144; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 87–94.

[39] Vgl. Mt 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Mk 8:11–12; Lk 11:16, 29, 30; 21:7.

[40] So H.-C. Kammler, „Die ‚Zeichen' des Auferstandenen. Überlegungen zur Exegese von Joh 20,30+31", in *Johannesstudien. Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (Hg. O. Hofius und idem; WUNT 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 191–211;

im Epilog des ersten Teils des Evangeliums (12:37) und dann im Schluss (20:30) nicht das ganze Offenbarungswirken Jesu bezeichnet.[41]

Schließlich benutzt Johannes zwar den Begriff „Zeichen“ im Einklang mit der alttestamentlich-jüdischen bzw. urchristlichen Tradition, er nutzt aber sein hermeneutisches Potenzial auf eigenständige Weise. Zwei Beobachtungen sind in dieser Hinsicht wertvoll. Zuerst erscheint der Begriff fast ausschließlich (zwei Ausnahmen: 6:26 und 4:48) im Munde des Erzählers, das heißt auf der Ebene der narrativen Interpretation. Zweitens, das Sehen des Zeichens wird problematisiert, denn es handelt sich nicht um ein einfaches, objektives, eindeutiges Sehen, sondern um ein Sehen, das auf komplexe Weise mit dem Glauben verbunden ist.

2. Das Objekt

Worauf bezieht sich das johanneische Zeichen? Der Verweischarakter der Zeichen wird sowohl durch den Erzähler als auch durch den johanneischen Jesus selbst abgeklärt. Am Ende des ersten programmatischen Zeichens[42] wird das Weinwunder durch den Erzähler folgendermaßen kommentiert: Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (Joh 2:11). Nach diesem Kommentar verweist das Zeichen von Kana auf die *Herrlichkeit* (δόξα) des johanneischen Jesus. Unter Herrlichkeit Jesu ist an die göttliche Präsenz, die in Jesus offenbar wird, zu denken. Das Zeichen bzw. das Wunder wird sachgemäß wahrgenommen, wenn es zur Entdeckung der Identität des johanneischen Jesus bzw. seiner Herrlichkeit führt.

Wenn versucht wird, den Begriff „Herrlichkeit“ Jesu näher zu bestimmen, dann ist die Beziehung zwischen der Manifestation der Herrlichkeit und dem Weinwunder genauer zu betrachten. Auf dem Hintergrund des Alten Testaments sind die Hochzeit, das Gastmahl und die Fülle des Weins als Metaphern des Anbruchs der messianischen Zeit zu betrachten.[43] Die Präsenz Gottes in Jesus ist somit positiv zu deuten: Mit ihr werden Leben und Freude in Fülle angeboten.

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vgl. C. Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Teilband 2: *Johannes 13–21* (ZBK 4/2; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2001), 348–49; K. Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2. Teilband: *Kapitel 11–21* (TKNT 4/2; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 305; H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 774.

[41] G. van Belle, „The Meaning of σημεῖα in Jn 20,30–31“, *ETL* 74 (1998): 300–25.

[42] Vgl. J. Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean (1–12)* (CNT 4a; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2014), 93–100; idem, „Die Bibel als literarisches Kunstwerk – gezeigt am Beispiel der Hochzeit zu Kana (Joh 2,1–11)“, in *Geist im Buchstaben? Neue Ansätze in der Exegese* (Hg. Th. Söding et al.; QD 225; Freiburg etc.: Herder, 2007), 68–82.

[43] Vgl. für die Hochzeit: Jes 54:4–8; 62:4–5; für den Wein in Fülle: Jes 25:6; Am 9:13; Hos 2:24; Jer 31:5.

Ein schwieriges Problem taucht hier auf. Es geht um die Interpretanten. Derjenige, der diesen Kommentar formuliert, ist kein objektiver Zeuge, sondern der Erzähler, das heißt eine Person, die die Sichtweise des johanneischen Jesus teilt. Stellt sich dann die Frage: Wer nimmt die Herrlichkeit wahr? Nach 2:11 sind es die Jünger, die als Glaubende dargestellt werden. Geht es bei den Jüngern aber um die Entstehung des Glaubens oder um die johanneische Strukturierung dieses Glaubens? Diese Frage ist umso mehr berechtigt, als die Jünger in Kapitel 1 als Glaubende dargestellt wurden.[44]

Der privilegierte Interpret des Verweischarakters der Zeichen ist aber derjenige, der sie ausführt, nämlich der johanneische Jesus. Die Geschichte der Auferweckung des Lazarus[45] liefert in dieser Hinsicht wertvolle Angaben. Dass dieses Wunder als Zeichen einzustufen ist, wird durch V. 47 bestätigt, wo die Opponenten es als σημεῖον qualifizieren. V. 4, der den hermeneutischen Rahmen für das kommende Wunder liefert, erklärt: αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς. Das heißt: Die Krankheit bzw. der Tod des Lazarus wird durch das Wunder zum Raum, in welchem die Herrlichkeit Gottes sich manifestieren wird. Wir haben mit demselben Modell wie in Joh 2:11 zu tun. Jedoch ist eine Nuance zu signalisieren. Es geht nicht mehr um den Verweis auf die Herrlichkeit Jesu, sondern um die Herrlichkeit Gottes. Jedoch ist von vornherein zu bemerken, dass die Manifestation der Herrlichkeit Gottes und die Verherrlichung des Sohnes untrennbar sind (vgl. den ἵνα-Satz).

Wenn die kommende Auferweckung des Lazarus auf die Herrlichkeit Gottes verweist, wie ist diese Herrlichkeit inhaltlich zu bestimmen? Zwei Aspekte sind hervorzuheben. Zuerst wird die Herrlichkeit Gottes in Verbindung mit der Gabe des Lebens gesetzt. Indem die Herrlichkeit Gottes offenbar wird, wird das Leben in Fülle angeboten. Zweitens, die Herrlichkeit Gottes ist zwar von der Person Jesu nicht zu trennen, aber die Verherrlichung Jesu wird zum Ereignis auf zwei Ebenen. Einerseits wird Jesus verherrlicht, indem er Lazarus ins Leben ruft. Als Lebensspender ist er der Verherrlichte, das heißt die Manifestation der rettenden Präsenz Gottes unter den Menschen. Andererseits aber führt die Gabe des Lebens Jesus zum Tode, wie es in V. 7–10, dann in V. 47–53 dargestellt ist. Als der Gekreuzigte ist er der Verherrlichte.

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[44] Vgl. die Aussagen der Jünger, die mit christologischen Hoheitstiteln formuliert sind: Messias (V. 41), König Israels (V. 49), Gottessohn (V. 49) und auch Erfüllung der Schrift (V. 49).

[45] Vgl. J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*, Bd. III: *Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten* (WUNT 117; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 403–62; O. Hofius, „Die Auferweckung des Lazarus", *ZTK* 102 (2005): 17–34; Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie*, 141–51 (Anm. 38), Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 360–83 (Anm. 42).

Die zweite Stelle, die für diese Fragestellung ergiebig ist, erscheint im Dialog Jesu mit Martha vor dem Grab des Lazarus (V. 40): οὐκ εἶπόν σοι ὅτι ἐὰν πιστεύσῃς ὄψῃ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ? Diese Aussage bestätigt den Inhalt von V. 4. Das Zeichen, das mit der Rückkehr des Lazarus ins Leben gegeben ist, ist der Raum, in dem sich die Herrlichkeit Gottes, das heißt seine rettende Präsenz, manifestiert. Zu bemerken ist, wie der Verweisprozess bzw. der Zugang zur Entdeckung der Herrlichkeit Gottes thematisiert wird. Der Ermöglichungsgrund des Sehens (ὁράω) der göttlichen Herrlichkeit ist der Glaube (πιστεύειν). Es gibt also kein unmittelbares, objektives Sehen des Objekts des Zeichens. Nur ein Sehen, das die Qualität des Glaubens besitzt, löst einen echten Verweis aus. Diese Aufforderung zum Glauben ist jedoch erstaunlich in unserem Kontext, in dem die Gesprächspartnerin Jesu ein echtes Glaubensbekenntnis in V. 27 abgelegt hat.

Dass der Verweischarakter des Zeichens scheitern kann, wird im großen Brotkapitel (Joh 6) signalisiert.[46] Zuerst in V. 26: ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτέ με οὐχ ὅτι εἴδετε σημεῖα, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἐφάγετε ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων καὶ ἐχορτάσθητε. Diese jesuanische Kritik am Verhalten der Volksmenge schildert, wie ein Zeichen nicht als Zeichen wahrgenommen werden kann. Die Volksmenge ist auf der Ebene der Immanenz geblieben, sie wurde fasziniert durch die reichliche Nahrung, die angeboten wurde, ohne diese Gabe in den sachgemäßen Kontext zu integrieren. In diesem Fall bleibt das Zeichen stumm.

Die Zeichenforderung, die in V. 30 formuliert wird (τί οὖν ποιεῖς σὺ σημεῖον, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμέν σοι), beschreibt auf eine andere Weise, wie der Verweischarakter des Zeichens fehlschlagen kann. Obwohl die Volksmenge zum Glauben eingeladen wurde (V. 29), fordert sie ein Legitimationszeichen, das heißt eine Leistung, die den Anspruch des johanneischen Jesus bewahrheiten würde. Die Ironie ist grausam, da gerade dieses Publikum Zeuge der Brotvermehrung wurde. Das Sehen, das zum Glauben führt, kann nur ein glaubendes Sehen sein. Das Paradox ist offensichtlich. Das Sehen, das die Offenbarung der Herrlichkeit Gottes nach seinen eigenen Kriterien beurteilen will, kann aus johanneischer Sicht nur misslingen.

Das Objekt, worauf verwiesen wird, verdient eine kleine Kommentierung. Es ist wohl bekannt, dass die Zeichen christologisch zu deuten sind, das heißt, sie verweisen auf den johanneischen Jesus. In den Kapiteln 6, 8 und 11 schildern die ἐγώ-εἰμι-Worte,[47] wie das Objekt zu verstehen ist: Im

[46] Zum argumentativen Duktus des Kapitels 6 siehe H. Weder, „Die Menschwerdung Gottes. Überlegungen zur Auslegungsproblematik des Johannesevangeliums am Beispiel von Joh 6“, in idem, *Einblicke ins Evangelium. Exegetische Beiträge zur neutestamentlichen Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 363–400; Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 206–44 (Anm. 42).

[47] „Ich bin das Brot des Lebens“ als Interpretament des Brotwunders (6:35); „Ich bin das Licht der Welt“ (8:12; vgl. 9:5) als Interpretament der Blindenheilung; „Ich bin die

absoluten ἐγώ εἰμι wird Jesus als Stellvertreter Gottes dargestellt, in den ἐγώ-εἰμι-Worten mit Prädikaten wird enthüllt, was das Kommen Gottes für die Menschen bedeutet.[48] Das Zusammenspiel zwischen der Offenbarung der Herrlichkeit Christi und der Herrlichkeit Gottes, die das erste und das letzte Wunder kennzeichnen, ist deswegen spannend, weil es den Kern der johanneischen Theologie, das heißt die Dialektik zwischen Christologie und Theologie, entdecken lässt. Indem das Zeichen auf die Person Jesu verweist, lässt es die rettende Präsenz Gottes entdecken. Umgekehrt gibt es keinen Verweis auf die rettende Präsenz Gottes unabhängig von der Person Jesu. Hinzuzufügen ist, dass die Enthüllung der göttlichen Herrlichkeit in der Person Jesu sowohl im Kanawunder (vgl. das Motiv der noch nicht gekommenen Stunde[49]) als auch in der Lazarusgeschichte in Verbindung mit der Verherrlichung am Kreuz gesetzt wird.[50]

Kurz gefasst: Das Erstaunliche in der johanneischen Erzählung besteht darin, dass das Objekt des Verweises – gerade in den Wundergeschichten – nicht zum Gebiet des Feststellbaren, sondern der Unverfügbarkeit gehört. Das erfolgreiche Sehen ist nicht weltlich, sondern glaubend geprägt.

3. Interpretant

Per definitionem ist ein Zeichen mehrdeutig. Seine Dekodierung hängt vom Kontext seiner Interpretation ab. In der Erzählung selbst haben die Zeichen keine eindeutige Bedeutung, sondern sie werden auf verschiedene Weise durch die Personen der Erzählung wahrgenommen. Diese fehlende Eindeutigkeit, die den Verweischarakter des Zeichens erschwert, ist umso überraschender, als die johanneischen Zeichen im Wesentlichen aus Wundergeschichten bestehen. Diese Mehrdeutigkeit kann auf folgende Weise dokumentiert werden.

a) Ignoranz und Anfechtung des Zeichens

Im Kanawunder bedeutet die Weinregel (2:9–10),[51] die durch den Speisemeister ausgesprochen wird, einerseits die Bestätigung des Wunders, anderseits aber, dass der Wein im Überfluss nicht als Wunder Jesu wahrgenommen wurde. Das heißt: Das Zeichen setzt sich nicht als Evidenz durch, es bleibt unanschaulich, da der treffende Interpretationskontext fehlt. Als

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Auferstehung und das Leben“ als Interpretament der Lazarus-Auferstehung (11:25); das absolute ἐγώ εἰμι als Interpretament des Seewandels (6:20).

[48] Vgl. den Exkurs über die ἐγώ-εἰμι-Worte in Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 226–28 (Anm. 42).

[49] Vgl. Joh 2:4.

[50] Vgl. Joh 11:4, 8, 16.

[51] Zu Parallelen in der Umwelt siehe H. Windisch, „Die johanneische Weinregel“, *ZNW* 14 (1913): 248–57; *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 122–23 (Anm. 1).

Störung der sozialen Regeln, nicht aber als Wunder wird es wahrgenommen.

In der Heilung des Blindgeborenen wird die Realität des Wunders sowohl durch die Nachbarn (V. 9: „Nein, er sieht ihm bloß ähnlich") als auch durch die Pharisäer (V. 18: „Die Juden wollten nicht glauben, dass er blind gewesen und sehend geworden war") angefochten. In diesem Fall haben wir es mit einem anderen Phänomen zu tun. Obwohl das Wunder wahrgenommen worden ist, wird seine Realität verneint, weil es sich der Weltanschauung der Zeugen widersetzt.

In diesen drei Fällen wird das Zeichen zwar als Störung der alltäglichen Wirklichkeit empfunden, aber die Erklärung, die dafür angeboten wird, bleibt im Rahmen der vorhandenen Welt. Im ersten Fall wird die Übertretung der normalen Regeln der Gastfreundschaft festgestellt. Im zweiten Fall wird die Hypothese eines Doppelgängers als Erklärung vorgeschlagen. Das heißt: Die immanente Welt bleibt die Enzyklopädie, worauf Bezug genommen wird, um der geschehenen Abnormalität Rechnung zu tragen. Im dritten Fall wird aus religiösen und kulturellen Gründen die Heilung eines Blindgeborenen durch einen Menschen prinzipiell als unmöglich betrachtet;[52] daraus ergibt sich, dass sie in der Wahrnehmung der Wirklichkeit durch die Opponenten keinen Raum haben kann.

Fazit: die weltliche Dekodierung der Wundergeschichten führt zu deren Ignoranz oder Anfechtung. Jedoch ist hinzuzufügen – und dieser Aspekt wird insbesondere in Kapitel 9 behandelt –, dass diese weltliche Betrachtungsweise nicht ohnehin durch alle angenommen wird, sie mündet in Spaltung (σχίσμα)[53] der Zuhörerschaft. Die erzwungene Erklärung, die nicht als vollends überzeugend empfunden wird, löst eine Krise der Erkenntnis aus.

b) Die nomistische Interpretation

Sowohl in Kapitel 5 als auch in Kapitel 9 wird das traditionelle religiöse Wissen als Schlüssel in Anspruch genommen, um das Zeichen zu dekodieren und abzulehnen. Das Argument, worauf die Opponenten sich berufen, ist die Übertretung des Sabbats (5:9b; 9:14). Der Kontext der Interpretation ist in diesem Fall die Thora, das heißt das Wort Gottes schlechthin. Stellt sich dann die Frage, ob die Schrift das sachgemäße Verständnis des Zeichens eröffnet oder verhindert. Das klassische Dilemma ist bekannt: Kann ein Mensch, der im Namen Gottes handelt, die Thora übertreten? Hier tut

[52] Vgl. *Neuer Wettstein* I/2, 489–99; A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1908), 89; M. Labahn, *Jesus als Lebensspender. Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundergeschichten* (BZNW 98; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1999), 328–35.

[53] Vgl. Joh 9:16; siehe auch 7:43; 10:19.

sich ein interessanter Sachverhalt auf, insofern hier nämlich das religiöse Wissen als solches – in diesem Fall die Schrift – noch nicht die letzte Referenz ist, die als nicht hinterfragbar gelten sollte. Zwar ist die Schrift durch das Handeln des johanneischen Jesus gar nicht infrage gestellt, aber sie führt zu einer angemessenen Dekodierung nur, insofern sie sachgemäß, das heißt christologisch, interpretiert wird.[54] Das Verhältnis zwischen der religiösen Enzyklopädie als Horizont der Interpretation und dem Zeichen ist keineswegs eindeutig.

c) Die triumphierende Interpretation (Kapitel 6)

Eine andere Variante des Interpretanten, das heißt des Kontextes der Interpretation, wird in Kapitel 6 erwähnt. Der Abschluss der Speisung der Fünftausend gibt ein weiteres Beispiel der religiösen Dekodierung, die wieder einmal durch Ambivalenz gekennzeichnet ist. Zuerst wird in V. 14 verkündet: Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Zuerst scheint die Dekodierung aus johanneischer Sicht angemessen zu sein. Einerseits wird das Zeichen als Verweis auf die Person Jesu wahrgenommen. Dann wird dem johanneischen Jesus eine eschatologische Würde verliehen (*der* Prophet mit Artikel; das „Kommen in die Welt" als johanneische Chiffre der Inkarnation).

Der nächste Vers zeigt jedoch, dass dieses an sich sachgemäße Bekenntnis dann im Sinne eines politischen Messianismus umgedeutet wird. Wir stehen vor demselben Problem wie vorher mit der Thora. Eine Aussage, die ihrem Wortlaut nach der johanneischen Christologie entspricht, kann dann auf verschiedene Weisen interpretiert werden. Wie das Königtum Jesu verstanden werden soll, wird erst die johanneische Passionsgeschichte in aller Klarheit zeigen. Das heißt: Nicht die messianische Hoffnung als solche ist ein Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Zeichen, sondern die christologische Interpretation der messianischen Hoffnung. Die Verwurzelung in einer denkwürdigen Tradition erweist sich als ungenügend, um die wahre Identität der Person, auf die das Zeichen verweist, wahrzunehmen.

[54] Vgl. A. Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium. Eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate* (WUNT 2/83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); M. Theobald, „Schriftzitate im ‚Lebensbrot'-Dialog Jesu (Joh 6). Ein Paradigma für den Schriftgebrauch des Vierten Evangelisten", in idem, *Studien zum Corpus Johanneum* (WUNT 267; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 309–48 (bes. 343–48).

d)Die jesuanische Interpretation bzw. die Interpretation des Erzählers (Joh 2:11; 9; 11)

Die sachgemäße Interpretation der Zeichen wird erreicht, wenn die σημεῖα als christologische Offenbarung der Herrlichkeit Gottes verstanden werden. Diese gelungene Auslegung wird einerseits vom johanneischen Jesus in den ἐγώ-εἰμι-Worten und in den zu den Wundergeschichten gehörenden Dialogen durchgeführt. Anderseits kommt sie in den Kommentaren des Erzählers zum Ausdruck.

Wenn wir diese johanneische Interpretation der Zeichen zur Kenntnis nehmen, stoßen wir jedoch auf eine erhebliche Schwierigkeit, die die Funktion selbst der Zeichen betrifft. Einerseits wird erzählt, dass die Zeichen (2:33; 4:48; 11:45; 12:11) die Menschen zum Glauben führen, andererseits aber wird gleichzeitig behauptet, dass nur ein glaubendes Sehen die Wunder als christologische Zeichen wahrnimmt (z. B. der Blindgeborene oder Martha). Wie ist dieser scheinbare Widerspruch zu lösen? Sind die Zeichen Einladung zum Glauben, oder ist der Glaube Ermöglichungsgrund des Verständnisses der Zeichen? Das Dreieck von Peirce gibt zu denken. Der Verweischarakter des Zeichens ohne Interpretant bleibt stumm. Wie funktioniert der Interpretant?

Zwei mögliche Figuren, die keine Alternative bilden, kommen infrage. Die erste Figur betrifft den Übergang vom Unglauben zum Glauben. In diesem Fall ist keine Kontinuität aufzuweisen, sondern das Zeichen löst eine Krise der Erkenntnis aus. Eine Diskontinuität erscheint. Das heißt: Der Interpretant, der durch Unglauben gekennzeichnet ist, wird radikal infrage gestellt und durch einen neuen Interpretanten ersetzt. Die zweite Figur zeichnet sich durch Vertiefung aus. Der erste Schluss des Evangeliums z. B. (20:30–31) ruft die Glaubenden zum Glauben. In diesem Fall geht es nicht um den Übergang vom Unglauben zum Glauben, sondern um eine neue Strukturierung des Glaubens, um den Übergang von einem elementaren zu einem vollendeten Glauben.[55]

III. Schluss

Wenn wir das philosophisch-religiöse Verständnis des Zeichens in der Antike mit demjenigen der johanneichen Literatur vergleichen und wenn wir versuchen, die allfälligen Analogien hervorzuheben, kommen wir zu folgendem Ergebnis.

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[55] Vgl. J. Zumstein, „Das Johannesevangelium als Strategie des Glaubens“, in idem, *Kreative Erinnerung. Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium* (ATANT 84; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2004), 31–45.

Erstens steht sowohl in der antiken philosophischen Tradition als auch bei Johannes die erkenntnistheoretische Dimension im Vordergrund. Dank eines σημεῖον ist der Mensch in der Lage, sich neue Kenntnisse anzueignen. Allerdings geht es um eine *indirekte* Kenntnis, die nur durch ein Verweisverfahren erlangt werden kann. Zweitens wird in der Regel diese neue Kenntnis durch einen visuellen Vorgang ausgelöst. Das „Zeichen" gehört somit zum Bereich der Empirie. Von daher – es ist der dritte Punkt – ist das σημεῖον nicht eindeutig zugänglich, sondern braucht einen Interpretanden (eine Person oder eine kulturelle Enzyklopädie). Schließlich spielt das „Zeichen" eine außerordentlich wichtige Rolle im religiösen Bereich, denn es ermöglicht die Kommunikation zwischen der transzendenten und der menschlichen Welt. Durch das σημεῖον wird der Beziehung zwischen der Gottheit und dem Menschen sichtbarer Ausdruck verliehen.

Wie hat die johanneische Literatur diese in der Antike weit verbreitete Auffassung des Zeichens spezifisch gestaltet? Zuerst ist auf den restriktiven Gebrauch des Begriffs σημεῖον hinzuweisen. Alle johanneische Zeichen gehören zum religiösen Bereich. Nur die Wunder können als Zeichen betrachtet werden, und nur der johanneische Jesus kann „Zeichen" vollbringen. Dann ist das Objekt des Verweises stets die göttliche Herrlichkeit, wie sie sich im Wirken des johanneischen Jesus enthüllt. Das heißt: Das Zeichen wird zu einer Vermittlung der göttlichen Offenbarung. Schließlich löst das σημεῖον als Offenbarungsgeschehen eine Krise der Erkenntnis aus. Das Zeichen ist weder offensichtlich noch eindeutig, sondern es fordert eine angemessene Interpretation, die aus dem Glauben entsteht. Und diese glaubende Interpretation hat ihrerseits die Funktion, zum Glauben zu rufen.

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